

SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL PROTEST AND REFORM IN MEDIEVAL ORISSA

(Circa 1500-1600 A.D.)

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BASANTA KUMAR MALLIK

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067**

1986

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

Gram : JAYENU

Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences

Telephone : 652282
652114


New Mehrauli Road,
NEW DELHI-110067.

15th July 1986

DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL PROTEST AND REFORM IN MEDIEVAL ORISSA (c.A.D.1500-1600)" submitted by Sri Basanta Kumar Mallik in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of "MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY", has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


(Prof. Satish Chandra)
Supervisor


(Prof. Suvira Jaiswal)
Chairperson

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BASANTA KUMAR MALLIK

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ABBREVIATIONS

EI	Epigraphica Indica
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IO	Inscriptions of Orissa
JASP	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal
JPASP	Journal and Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal
NBT	National Book Trust
OHRJ	Orissa Historical Research Journal
PIHC	Proceedings on Indian History Congress
RP	Radharaman Press
SII	South Indian Inscriptions

CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The medieval bhakti movement was undoubtedly the most wide-spread, far-ranging and multi-faceted movement that appeared in India. The bhakti movement influenced almost the whole country at different times, and had a definite impact not only on religious doctrines, rituals, values and popular beliefs, but on arts and cultures as well. In turn, there had an impact on the value structure of the medieval state and the ruling classes. In the cultural field, the growth of regional languages, devotional music, dance, painting, sculpture etc., became closely related to the bhakti movement.¹

Many scholars have studied the ideas of the monotheistic teachers and have shown how they could have been derived from certain schools of Hinduism or from certain elements of Islam. It has been urged, on the one hand, that devotional elements, which undoubtedly influenced those teachers, were present in the bhakti tradition

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1. Satish Chandra, "Historical Background to the Rise of the Bhakti Movement in Northern India", Introduction to Social Life and Concepts in Medieval Hindi Bhakti Poetry - A Socio-Cultural Study by Savitri Chandra Shobha, New Delhi, 1983, p. 1.

within Hinduism long before the rise of Islam. Pantheism in one form or another is to be found in Shankaracharya. Similarly, the hostility to the caste system which the medieval monotheistics displayed is traced back in its origins to pre-Islamic times. The late Buddhistic siddhas were, many of them of low castes and antagonistic to Brahmins. The argument has been advanced that the role of Islam in contributing to the rise of the anti-caste, anti-ritualistic monotheism was merely an indirect or external one. On the other hand, it is argued that only the Islamic influence can explain the uncompromising monotheism which we meet both among the medieval Indian monotheists, along with their conception of a personal God, their egalitarian attitude, their disavowal of esoteric ritual and their practice of public preaching. Muslim mysticism, or sufism, too had its part to play in shaping the pantheistic and mystical views of the monotheistic teachers.² There is probably much truth in both the views, and undoubtedly the medieval monotheists picked up their ideas from the ideological store of Hinduism as well as Islam.

2. Irfan Habib, "The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th-17th Centuries", Ideas in History, Bishweswar Prasad (ed), Bombay, 1969.

The bhakti cult was popular as it laid stress on issues like equality of all religions, unity of God-head, dignity of man's actions, simple devotion and protest against ritualism and priest-hood. All the schools of thought belonging to the genre of bhakti believed in the existence of a God supernaturally revealed to man. The chief attribute of this movement was the attitude of the soul with regard to the Supreme Being.

There were two eminent schools of bhakti cult popularly known as sagunas and nirgunas. The teachers of saguna school of thought believed in the presence of God with all human attributes. According to them, God is like a man with supernatural qualities. Sagunas, who enriched Hinduism, believed in the authority of the vedas and did not like to challenge the traditions of the past. But, the nirguna teachers preached the formlessness of God. According to them God has no human attributes, it is nirakara or formless.

A micro-level study of the bhakti movement has become indispensable for a clearer understanding of its nature and evaluation. In the present work an attempt has been made to study the implications of the bhakti movement in medieval Orissa, particularly during the 16th century. The Panchasakha movement which grew during the 16th century

protested against caste, untouchability and discrimination against Shudras.

Puri was a great centre of learning and education then. A large number of Sanskrit scholars from the different corners of India came to it and participated in intellectual discourses. The pundits considered Puri to be the highest centre of examination. In the 11th century, while Chodagangadev was ruling over Orissa, Ramanuja, the founder of the Vishistadvait philosophy, came to Puri and preached his ideas. Jayadev wrote the "Gita-Govinda" during this period, which was one of the perennial streams of Vaishnavism. Chodagangadev also took interest in the construction of the Jagannath temple. According to traditions, Vidyapati, a great poet of Mithila, also came to Orissa during this time. The writings of Chandi Das in Bengali and Braja bhasa also became popular. Ramananda came to Puri at the end of the 14th century and preached his philosophy. Kabir visited it in the early 15th century and preached his doctrine based on the equal status of all religions. According to traditions, Tulsidas and Guru Nanak also visited Puri during the early phase of the 16th century and preached their respective ideas. In the middle of this century, Guru Nanak's son, Sri Chandra, the founder of the "Udasi Sampraday" and Vallabhacharya, the founder of the Suddhadvaita (pure monism), also arrived at Puri to

preach their view points.

In this present work various social, religious and political aspects of the 16th century Orissa have been examined critically. A study of the state and the society have been taken up briefly at the beginning of this work. The nature of the state in medieval Orissa was monarchica whereas the society was caste-ridden and legitimised by the dominant Brahminical religious doctrines. Gajapati Pratapudradev ruled over Orissa during the period under review. Sri Chaitanya visited Orissa during this period and preached Vaishnavism in a new form. Herein, the structure of the society, nature of the state and the impact of Vaishnavism on the social structure of Orissa have been analysed.

In chapter II, the various causes responsible for the emergence of a non-conformist movement against the established order of society have been discussed. Social discrimination, like the evil practices of casteism and untouchability, deprivation of Shudras from learning and possessing land, and above all social inequality was a pivotal force behind this. Social status was religiously and ritually determined. The Panchasakha movement gained momentum during this period. This movement was directed against Brahminism, casteism,

the principle and practice of untouchability and against the existing social order. Panchasakhas, or the five associates were known as Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Jashovanta Das and Ananta Das. As regards their caste background, it is known from various sources that four of them were Shudras and only one was a Brahmin. As symbols of reform they renounced their original caste surnames and adopted the surname "Das" (servant of God). The nature and objectives of their ideology and teachings, and the social significance of their protest have been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter III explicates the spread of the reform movement and social change during the said period. The region and the period of our study also witnessed the spread of the bhakti ideology through the Gaudiya Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya. His social outlook was broad and expansive, leading to it being characterized as a popular movement. Sri Chaitanya accepted disciples from all sections of the society, irrespective of their caste and creed. The Panchsakhas also became his disciples and preached bhakti (love and devotion) as a medium of worship. Sri Chaitanya propagated the ideas of bhakti and reached out to the common people through Samkirtan (collective recitation of the hymn) and the Nagar Kirtan

denominations were able to assemble at one place for the purpose of samkirtan. This movement was widely and popularly accepted by all, believing in the 'importance to merit but not to birth'. In this chapter the nature and objective of the popular movement, and its spread and impact on the people (particularly peasants) have been emphasised.

The sixteenth century is considered to have been a period of "literary renaissance" in the history of Oriya literature. Sarla Das, the first Shudra poet of Orissa, who wrote the Oriya Mahabharat lived in the 15th century A.D. But the Panchasakhas who emerged in the 16th century, made the most notable contribution towards the development and efflorescence of Oriya language and literature. They translated many treatises from Sanskrit to Oriya and also produced a number of original works. They gave importance to the promotion of regional languages so that the people could read and understand the religious scriptures by themselves. Earlier, the Dharmashastras and Purans had been written in Sanskrit, the language of Oriya urban elites. The village folks virtually had no access to Dharmashastras and Purans, not being initiated into Sanskrit. With the development of the Panchasakha literature, the people had an opportunity of reading the deliberations and

discourses on Vedas, Shashtra and Purans.

The writings and teachings of Panchasakhas invoked the wrath of the dominant vested interests. Thus, some of them were imprisoned, and a few even tortured, whereas some others were banished from their own areas. But they endeared themselves to the commonfolks by their genuine emphasis on egalitarianism. They did not want to found a new religion, but struggled to reform Hinduism with the objective of bringing about social harmony, universal brotherhood, social equality and stability.

CHAPTER II

STATE AND SOCIETY IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY ORISSA

The sixteenth century was a remarkable period in the history of Orissa. It was an era of reforms and the development of the consciousness for social equality. The literary development and the cultural renaissance which made their appearance in the early phase of this period were accompanied by the efflorescence in art and sculpture and religious reform. The raising of mass consciousness was done by a group of saint-poets, almost in opposition to the dominant and ruling elements of the times. They protested against exploitation and discrimination on the basis of birth, through their writings of the Puranas, and other religious poems. They emphasised the equality and happiness of all mankind. For a clearer understanding of this movement it is necessary to briefly analyse the nature of the state and society of the period under review.

After the glorious reign of Gajapati Purushottamdev, the throne was occupied by his son Prataprudradev in 1497 A.D. The rule of Prataprudradev started with political conflicts with Bengal and Vijayanagar.³ However, in spite

3. P. Mukherjee, The History of the Gajapati Kings of Orissa, Cuttack 1981, pp. 73-85, Vide K.C. Panigrahi "Panchasakha Yuga O Orissara Rajanaitik Itihas", B. Mohanty (ed), Konark, Orissa Sahitya Academy, 1971.

of the continuous military expeditions and attention to state affairs, the king did not neglect in participating in the religious discussions at the Muktimandap, in the Jagannath temple. He was a pious man and a devotee of Lord Jagannath. In 1510 he also welcomed Sri Chaitanya to Orissa.

Prataprudradev was a great patron of learning. In the inscription at Undavali, he is called the master of all arts and the repository of sixtyfour kinds of learning.⁴ A number of scholars were close to the king and they assumed the title of Vidyanidhi.⁵ According to the Madalapanji, Prataprudra built the audience hall of the Jagannath temple. Besides, he constructed the temple of Chandrasekhar on the Kapilasa hill, and renovated the temple of Varaha at Jajpur.

The Gajapati patronised a number of scholars in Sanskrit. It is learnt from the various inscriptions that he granted villages and lands to Brahmins.⁶ He was

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4. Undavalli Inscription (Telgu), Guntur District, August 1526, No.47 A of 1919.
 5. Velicherla Plates (Sanskrit), Nellore District, October 4, 1510, No. 12 of 1920-21.
 6. Idupulupadu Inscription of Guntur District (Sanskrit), November 1500, No.302 of 1922, Vide Rajourolu plates of Nellore District (Telgu), May 3, 1501, Bharati XV and Gudimelapadu inscription of Nellore District (Telgu), January 12, 1512, No. 56 of 1945-46.

undoubtedly attracted by Chaitanya's charisma. He himself was well versed in Vaishnav theology and also honoured Ramananda for his erudite learning. He favoured the Vaishnavas of the Orissan school and paid keen interest in their exposition of the religious philosophy.

The nature of the state was monarchical. The kings used to move from place to place on tour or on pilgrimage. In October 1510, Prataprudradev held his court at Undrakanda Kataka (Cuttack).⁷ The courts were held on Dusserha days. The Suryavamshi kings called themselves the overlords of Gauda, Karnata and Kalabarga. They also adopted other titles such as Param-Bhattaraka, Param-Vaishnava, etc. According to Paes, "The king of Orya has much treasure and many soldiers and many elephants - There is no ruler greater than he."⁸

The Brahmin villages or settlements were popularly known as sasanas. The kings also granted villages in their names or in the name of their parents. The villages of Kapilapur, Purushottampur and Pratappur in the Ganjam district bear the names of the Gajapati kings. Cuttack, the capital, "resembled Amaravati", the city of Indra.

7. P. Mukherjee, op. city., p. 123.

8. R. Sewell, A Forgotten Empire-Antiquities of the Madras Presidency, p. 240.

The city of Cuttack was like the girdle of the earth-goddess⁹ and was called Kataka-Pattan in the Undavalli inscription (No. 47A of 1899). It was a port and a commercial centre also. The old name of the capital was Baranasi-Katak, which, in course of time, was shortened to Katak. One of the Jagannath temple inscriptions of Purushottamdev, dated in the 19th anka, tells us that the king was staying at that time at Baranasi Kataka. This name still survives as Bidanasi, which is the Westernmost part of Cuttack along the Kathjuri river.¹⁰

The ministers and officers assisted the Gajapatis in the task of administration. The ministers were very powerful and were also king-makers. According to the Janga Vamshanucharritam, the ministers deposed Kadjala Bhanu and placed Kapilendradev on the throne. It is stated in the Anantavaram copper plates that the ministers (amatyas) installed Prataprudradev on the throne. There was a strong demand for hereditary succession among the officials. We learn from the

9. "Bhukanta katikam kataka nagaram", Shama Shastri (ed), Saraswati Vilasam, p. 11.

10. In fact, the term Kataka signifies capital in Oriya language. The king Anangabhimdev III had shifted his capital from Mahamukhalingam (Kalinganagari) to Baranasi and the place came to be called as "Abhinav Baranasi Kataka. In course of time it was shortened as Kataka (Cuttack) only. (His Nagari plates dated 1229 AD), Journal of Oriental Studies, Madras, vol. X II, pt. 4.

Gopinathpur temple inscription that Narayan Mohapatra, elder brother of Gopinath, was the head of the ministers (Mantri Sreni Siromani). Gopinath Mohapatra subsequently became the Chief Minister of the Kingdom. Prataprudradev held his court at Updrakonda, surrounded by Patras, Behera, Mohapatras and the Samantas.¹¹

Some military titles under the Gajapatis tended to become hereditary. Such titles were Mahasenapati (Commander-in-Chief), Sandhivigrahika (Minister for War and Peace), Senanarendra (Chief of the Army), Majhi (Captain of the Army). Most of these titles lost their original significance during the later Ganga period.¹² Jaleswar Bhattacharya, a scholar who knew more of the pen than the sword, was honoured with the title of Vahinipati by Prataprudradev.

The kings conferred the titles of Patra, Mahapatra, Behara, Behara Mahapatra, Samantray and Harichandan upon officials and Chiefs of civil affairs. Sarvarja Behara Mahapatra and his son Chodaraja Behara Mahapatra ruled Panchadharla as vassal chiefs under Prataprudradev.¹³

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11. Venkateramaya, The Velicherla Grant of Prataprudradev, JARS, X I.
 12. The Puri plates of Narasimhadev IV dated 1384 and 1395 AD refer to four persons who had the title of Mahasenapati but, in fact, they were Sri Karans (Writers of Accounts). These copper plates refer to seven persons who had the title of Sandhivigrahika.
 13. Inscription No. 221 and 246 of 1399.

At this point, a look at the administrative pattern of medieval Orissa becomes imperative. The northern part of the territory was divided into a number of administrative units, called Dandapatas. These Dandapatas were also divided into Bisis or Khandas. From the Madalapanji it is learnt that these units or fiscal divisions have survived as Parganas or mahals, and have been enumerated by Abul-Fazl also.¹⁴

The Dandapatas of Kalinga and Asikasi constituted the present district of Ganjam. Kalinga was referred to as Kaling Dandapat Mahal in the Ain-i-Akbari. Only in this case the original name has been retained. The Dandapatas of Lembai Dakshinadiga, Kothadesa, Sirai and Chhabiskud consisted of the present district of puri. The Cuttack district was made up of the Dandapadas of Ahara, Baranga, Sargara, Ali and Purvadiga. The Dandapatas of Bhimnagar, Athagarh and Paschimdiga were covered by the present district of Dhenkanal. The present district Balasore was made up of the Dandapatas of Bhadrak, Soro, Remuna, Jaleswar and Muljyatha. Kalinganagar appears to be the headquarter of the Kalinga Dandapata. Kalinga as an administrative unit was larger in size than most of the Dandapatas, some of which were too small to

14. Abul-Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, vol.II, p. 138. See also M.M. Chakravarty, "Notes on the Geography of Orissa in the 16th Century", Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JPASB), 1916, p.23 ff.

have Bisis.¹⁵

The southern part of Orissa consisted of three territorial divisions: the Rajyas or provinces of Rajamundry, Kondavidu and Udayagiri. Under the Gajapati kings, Rajahmundry corresponded to the Vishakhapatanam and the Godavari districts. Kondavidu comprised the Krishna delta and Udayagiri extended roughly from the Gundlakammas in the north to the Pennar in the south. The Vijayanagar province of Chandragiri was situated to the south of the Pennar.¹⁶

The Officer-in-charge of a Dandapata was called Parikshya. The Pariksha of the Kalinga Dandapata was also called Adhyaksha and Pratipalak. (No. 317 of 1896). The Governors of rajyas were designated as Rajas and also as Parikshas. Ramananda Raya was appointed Raja of Rajahmundry by Gajpati Prataprudradev.¹⁷ The Governors and also some low rank officers were able to grant some villages and lands to Brahmins and temples.

The provincial and district officers maintained law and order. They were entrusted with the duty of collecting land-revenue, out of which a percentage was paid to the state. The Governors in the southern part

15. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

16. Ibid., pp. 128-129.

17. Krishnadas Kaviraj, Chaitanya Charitamrita, III, 39.

of the kingdom defended their territories from external aggression.¹⁸

The army, in medieval Orissa, was divided into infantry (paika), cavalry and the squads of elephants. We learn from the Madalapanji that the infantry consisted of Itikaras (lances), Phadikaras (swords men) and archers (Dhanuki). Seventy paikas formed a Bhuiyan or a group, and twentyseven Bhuiyans formed a "Dala" or detachment. The detachment was accompanied by a non-combatant volunteers' force to look after wounded persons.¹⁹ Cavalry and elephants formed an important element in the army.

There was also a provision of keeping crown-lands known as Bisi or Khanda. The parganas of Naha-khanda and Dera-Bishi in the Cuttack district have retained their old nomenclature. The Bisi or Khada was under two hereditary officers called Khandadhipati or Bisoyee and Bhoulil. The Bisoyee, was in charge of law and order within the Khanda or Bisi while the Bhoulil supervised the revenue collection. Bisis or Khandas were divided into numerous villages and every important village had its headman called "pradhan" and "Bhoi". They were respectively the counterparts of Bisoyee and

18. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 132.

19. Ibid., pp. 132-33.

Bhoumil. The Pradhans and Bhois held hita or service lands which they could sell along with their offices. The Bisoyee and Bhoumils worked under the supervision of Parikshas of the Dandapatas.²⁰

The kingdom was parcelled out among the "Samantas" or chiefs for the collection of land-revenue and maintenance of law and order. We may refer to a few dynasties such as Chalukyas of Panchadharla, the Matsyas of Oddadi, Suryavamsis of Jeypore and many others. Sarva-raja Behara Mohapatra and his son Chodaraj Behara Mohapatra ruled at Panchadharla as vassal chiefs under the Gajapati Prataprudradev. Vallabharaja Behara Mohapatra was a Matsya Chief of Oddadi. Naraharidas Behara Mohapatra was a pariksha of the Kalinga dandapat. The Bisoyee was in charge of law and order within the Khanda or Bisi while the Bhoumil supervised the revenue collection. At the village level the zamindars who assumed the titles of Pradhan and Bhoi collected the land-revenue in kind. They made contracts with peasants for the produce of the land. This land-revenue was known as sanja. The zamindars used to collect five pautis of paddy from one Bati of land and out of this one pauti of paddy was to be preserved as the grain-seed in

20. Ibid., p. 130.

the farm-yard. There were agricultural labourers who were hired for daily wages. Besides the agricultural labourers, there were also many artisans in medieval Orissa, who were known as mapuni (grain measures), bindhani (mason), niyogi (Supervisor), Kurala (potter) and Maharana (carpenter).²¹

In many inscriptions of this period it is mentioned that, puttis of land were given away for rendering prescribed services to the temples also.²²

The structure of medieval Orissan society was characterised by an order of ascending reverence and descending contempt. It was caste-ridden on the basis of Varnashramadharm and dominated by orthodox religious dogmas. The picture of the medieval Orissan society has been clearly reflected in contemporary inscriptions, literatures and many other works.

Since very early times caste system has been a unique feature in Hindu society. Thus, it was not a unique or peculiar phenomenon in case of the sixteenth

21. Ibid, p. 160, Sarala Mahabharat, Shanti and Sabha parv.

22. putti almost corresponds with the measurements of a Bati in Puri district. The Puri district land measure is : 14 cubits square : 1 gunta, about 2½ manas = 1 acre, and about 8½ acres = 1 Bati. In Cuttack district the measurement has been simplified by taking a mana = a acre of land.

century Orissa only. Invariably, all the records, beginning with the Hatigumpha Inscription of Kharavela (1st century AD) refer to Brahmins.²³ The Brahmins were liberally patronised by the kings. It was considered to be a religious act to bestow gifts and to exempt them from impositions. It is stated in the Veligalani plates that Kapilendradev wanted to give away the whole world to Brahmins to make known his fame. We learn from his inscription at Jakkampudi that Kapilendradev established a rest house for the Brahmin pilgrims who visited the papavinasana temple at Vijayawada.²⁴ Purushottamdev exempted only the Brahmins of the Dakshinadiga Dandapata from the payment of the Chaukidari tax, as stated in his Jagannath temple inscription dated 1470. In another inscription dated 1485 in the Jagannath temple he advised the kings of Orissa to make gifts to the Brahmins and never to deprive them of wealth, wife, life and land.

The establishment of a "Sasana" or Brahmin village was considered a meritorious act. Kapilendradev established Sasanas for the merit of his parents and for his own merit, as stated in the Veligalani plates. He also

23. D. Das, Early History of Kaling, Calcutta, 1977, p. 263.

24. Inscription No. 308 of 1892, S.I.I. I V, No. 761, Saka, 1387, 1 65 (Sanskrit) Jakkampudi Vijawada Taluk, Krishna District.

established Kapilesvarpur Sasanas in Ganjam and Puri districts. His son Purushottamdev established the Sasana of Purushottampur (in Ganjam district) and granted the same village to a Brahmin of Balasore district, named Potesvar Bhatt. The Governors and high officers also followed the examples of the kings.²⁵

Kapilendradev made a gift of the village of Veligalani to the Brahmins for the merit of his parents. Purushottamdev granted a village to Potesvar Bhatt to be enjoyed by the donee and his descendants as long as the moon and the sun would shine. The village of Velicherla was granted by Prataprudradev to a Brahmin named Kondayya, pouring out libation of water. The gift was unconditional and inclusive of all proprietary rights (Sarvabhoga Samanvita). The donee was also given the right to mortgage and sell the land.

It should not be assumed that the Brahmins had the monopoly of prestige and learning in medieval Orissa. The non-Brahmins took the lead in the renaissance that took place during the reign of Prataprudradev. Sarala Das, the first great Oriya poet, was a Shudra by caste. He composed the Oriya Mahabharat and many other treatises. Ramananda Roy (surnamed Pattanayak) eclipsed the Brahmins

25. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 150.

in his knowledge of Vaishnav theology.²⁶ Among the five great exponents of Orissan Vaishnavism, four were Shudras or broadly speaking non-Brahmins, namely, Balaram Das, Achyutananda Das, Yashovanta Das and Ananta Das. We are told that king Prataprudradev patronised Balaram Das and Achyutananda Das for their erudite scholarship, which aroused the jealousy of the Brahmins. Balaram relates in his Vedanta-sara-Gupta Gita that he was summoned before the king on the complaint of the Brahmins and made to explain the principles of the Vēdanta. Achyutananda similarly narrates a story of Brahminical persecution in his Sunya Samhita.

Agriculture was the back-bone of medieval Orissan economy and the chief source of income of the state was land-revenue. Besides the land-revenue, various types of taxes and tolls were also collected from the people. Kapilendradev remitted the taxes which were levied on salts and cowries. The salt-tax Officer (lavana-kara-adhikari) is mentioned in an inscription of Chodagangadev.²⁷ Purushottamdev exempted the Brahmins of the Dakshinadiga Dandapata from the payment of the Chaukidari tax. We learn from the Velicherla copper plates (1.24)

26. K. Kaviraj, Chaitanya Charitamrita, II,

27. S.I.I., vol. V, No. 1035.



that Prataprudradev granted a village to a Brahmin, exempting the land from thirty-six kinds of imposts.²⁸

Thus, the distribution of wealth in the kingdom was not equitable: The Brahmins enjoyed tax-free lands while the burden of taxation fell chiefly on the traders and peasants.

Religion played an important role in the life of the people of medieval Orissa. The temples enjoyed the regal patronage of the Gajapati kings and rich persons. It was believed that benefactions to the temples would increase the merit of donors and their ancestors and would also increase their happiness and progenies. Taxes and tolls were made over to the temples for its maintenance.

The Gajapati kings' professed Vaishnavism. They bestowed special attention to the Vishnu temples, though the temples of other sects were not neglected. It was considered meritorious to grant land, money, ornaments and cows to the temples. The king and rich persons not only gave away lands for temple services but also took steps to prevent disputes in future which might lead to the resumption of temple lands (Devadanabhumi).

28. Inscription No. 285 of 1899.

Complete ownership of lands without any reservation was transferred to a temple accompanied by the ceremony of pouring water with gold.

Orissan Vaishnavism which may be called the cult of Jagannath, was eclectic. Under the imperial Gangas, Vaishnavism became the predominant religion in Orissa. It did not completely eclipse other sects such as Saivism, Buddhism, the Nath and Tantric cults. It centred round the conception of Jagannath as a symbol of religious syncretism. Every religious movement which flooded Orissa at different periods of history, established its sway in the temple of Jagannath, and when the flood subsided left its water mark within the Jagannath temple precincts. During the centuries of co-existence, these religious beliefs shed their angularities and finally merged into the worship of Lord Jagannath. Thus, within the broad and receptive cult of Jagannath, divergent doctrines were assimilated, eliminating thereby their sectarian differences.

CHAPTER III
NATURE OF SOCIAL PROTEST

In almost all the Indian regions, during the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a religious upheaval which had a great bearing on the shaping of Indian religion and society of the time. In north as well as in the south, in the east and west, all over then, a large number of mystics and saints took to writing, social reform and universalization of man's most intimate of sentiments. Almost all of them were wanderers, wanderers in the name of God and in the service of the people. They were against the establishment, against all monastic order, against all sectarian zealotry and the caste discriminations in society. All of them claimed relevance for religion in social life, in the sphere of real human aspirations and social relationships.

What is remarkable about the medieval Indian monotheistic teachers is that most of them belonged to the lowly classes and it was among these classes again that they preached. Kabir, the most outstanding of them, was a weaver of Banaras; and Ravidas, his contemporary, a cobbler of the same city. With Nanak, who was a grain-merchant, they formed a kind of 'trinity among leaders of the monotheistic movement. Another contemporary of

theirs was the saint Sain, a barber and village menial. Dhanna was a Jat peasant from Deoli in Rajasthan. Dadu, a contemporary of Akbar and the teacher of Dadu-Panthis was a cotton-carder (naddag). Haridas (dated 1645), the teacher of Niranjis, was a Jat slave. And Namdev, a calico-painter from Maharashtra, who lived in the 14th century, was apparently recognised by the monotheists as one of their precursors. They had indeed the conscious feeling that they had opened the path to God for the poor.²⁹ Similarly, the monotheistic Oriya teachers also hailed from the lower order of the society and propagated the ideas of bhakti using the popular dialects. In the present chapter, we attempt to discuss the social composition of Oriya monotheists, their way of protest against caste, untouchability, low status of women and the existing order of society. Their struggle has been characterised as the Panchaskha movement, which took place in the 16th century Orissa.

The Panchasakhas or five friends were popularly known as Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Yashovant Das and Ananta Das. It is learnt from the Sunyasamhita of Achyutananda Das and Madalapanji that

29. Irfan Habib, op. cit.,

they were five friends and were associated with Sri-Chaitanya in the performance of samkirtan.³⁰ Balaram Das was the eldest of them. His year of birth has been fixed almost unanimously by all scholars around 1470 A.D. Because of paucity of definite historical evidence, there is also an opinion that the five saint-poets were not contemporaries at all. It may be argued that often the tradition that persists down the ages is many a time more dependable as evidence than historical calculations. And the tradition seems to show in various ways that the Panchasakhas really were contemporaries, even there are several bhajans available which have a joint authorship by each of the five sakhas. Achyutananda and Yoshavant have written books where they narrate how the five fellow sakhas really moved and worked together, faced the times together, the socio-religious scene of their time.

In fact, the tone of protest was set a century earlier by Sarala Das, the Shudra poet, and a devotee of goddess Sarala of Jhankar in the district of Cuttack.

30. A.B. Mohanty (ed), Madalapanji, Prachi, 1971, pp. 54-55.

"Achyuta Ananta gheni Jashovanta
Balaram Jagannath,
E Panchasakhae nrity karigale
Gauranga chandra sangat". Sunya Samhita, Ch.I

31. C.R. Das, Balaram Das, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1982, p. 11, Vide B. Mohanty (ed), Konark: Panchasakha Special, Orissa Sahitya Academy, 1971, (Editorial).

He was the first Oriya poet to have deviated set pattern of writing Puran. His Mahabharat is a colossal epic written in lucid Oriya.³² Still more important was his version of the legendary origin of Lord Jagannath wherein he gives primacy to the sabara (hunters) or non-Brahminic priests of the Lord.³³ Yet, his was a deep resentment to the ascendancy of the Brahminical order. But the Panchasakhas boldly challenged the different aspects of the social order of the day and even suffered persecution on that account at the hands of the dominant vested interests. Their movement, however, led to a considerable re-adjustment of social mechanism.

The nature of their protest can be understood only against a background of the society which they attacked. In the twelfth century, Orissa emerged as a single homogeneous political unit. Anantavarman chodagangadev who ruled over Kalinga with his capital at Kalinga Nagar (modern Mukhalingam) defeated Kamadev of the Samavamshi dynasty in 1110 A.D. and thus united Utkal with Kalinga.³⁴ At the same time we notice a gradual decline in the importance of several sub-regional deities like Viraja of Jajpur, Lingaraj of Bhubaneswar and Gokarneswar of Mahendragiri, and a simultaneous rise in the celebrity of

32. R.K. Das, "Social Protest in Medieval Orissa", PIHC, 1980, p. 340.

33. A.B. Mohanty (ed), Sarala Mahabharat, 1968, pp.108-117.

34. K.C. Panigrahi, Chronology of Somavanshis and Bhaumakaras of Orissa, Madras, 1961, p. 39.

Purushottam Jagannath of Puri, originally an aboriginal deity.³⁵ With the passage of time all the deities of Orissa, big or small, were bound to Jagannath in a tie of subordination. It was during the Gangas and Suryavamshi rule that Lord Jagannath gained ascendancy as a sovereign deity in society and the state of Orissa. Chodagangadev who was at first a Saiva turned to Vaishnavism around 1113 A.D. and, therefore, patronised Lord Jagannath of Puri. He is also said to have constructed the temple of Jagannath.³⁶

The Ganga and Suryavamshi rulers subsequently patronised and supported the all-round development of the Shrimandir and the spread of the Jagannath cult. Anangabhimadev III described his empire as Purushottam samrajya and himself as the deputy of Lord Jagannath.³⁷ Some inscriptions of Bhanu II of the same Ganga dynasty mention Purushottam as the reigning king and omit the name of Bhanu altogether.³⁸ Kapilendradev and Purushottamdev of Solar dynasty (Suryavamshi) declared themselves as nominees of Lord Jagannath and issued orders to their

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35. D.C. Sircar, Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India, Delhi, 1971, p. 62.
36. EI, vol. XXVIII, pp. 240-41.
37. M. Kulke, Kshatriyazation and Social Change: In Aspects of Changing India, Bombay, 1976, p. 5.
38. D.C. Sircar, op. cit., 1971, pp. 65-66.

feudatories in His name.³⁹ Thus, the divine theory of kingship prevailed in medieval Orissa. All rulers lavishly endowed Lord Jagannath with money and gifts from time to time. Anangabhimha III, about whom we have discussed, created thirty-six types of sevakas for the daily worship of Lord Jagannath.⁴⁰ Measures were taken to publicize the fame of Lord and to draw pilgrims from different parts of the country by creating the panda system.⁴¹ In this way, Jagannath originally, a tribal deity, was Brahmanized or Hinduised. Sanskrit religious texts such as Purushottam Mahatmya and Niladri Mahoday composed during this period, projected Jagannath as a deity in the Hindu pantheon.⁴²

The mode of worship was changed accordingly and the kings used to grant lands to Brahmins for performing the Pujas. Both Ganga and Suryavamshi rulers considered donation of land as highly meritorious. Kapilendradev,

39. H. Kulke, Kings without a Kingdom, South Asia, vol. IV, 1974.

40. A.B. Mohanty (ed), Madalapanji, Prachi, 1971, p. 32.

41. K.C. Mishra, The Cult of Jagannath, Calcutta, 1971, p. 44.

42. Ibid., p. 96.

for example, wanted to give away the most precious things, even the whole world, to the Brahmins.⁴³ The Brahmins, besides performing religious ceremonies, acted as the foci of culture.⁴⁴ It was they who held out to the people the immense benefits of listening to the Puranas. Since the common people were not allowed to read Puranas, the Puran Pandas read out and explained them the contents of Purans which were all written in Sanskrit.⁴⁵ Apart from the supernatural elements, the Purans emphasized social norms as well as social sanctions or penalties for infringing them.⁴⁶ This was a clever and convenient way of maintaining social cohesion, and also of socializing young minds in the traditional social system. Over and above, was the Muktimandap, an assembly of Orthodox Brahmin pundits, within the premises of the Jagannath temple. This was the highest authority in socio-religious matters,⁴⁷ and its verdict was enforced, if necessary, under the authority of the king.⁴⁸ Muktimandap was also a place of intellectual discourse, which only the Brahmins could

43. P. Mukherjee, The History of the Gajapati Kings of Orissa, Cuttack, 1981, p. 150.

44. R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, 1965, p.285.

45. K.C. Panigrahi, Sarala Das, Delhi, 1975, p. 28.

46. Ibid., p. 84.

47. K.C. Mishra, op. cit., p. 207.

48. Balaram Das, Vedantasar Gupta Gita, Prachi, Cuttack, p. 3.

carry on and to which only their brethren and the king could listen.⁴⁹

The five social reformers popularly known as the Panchasakhas, raised their voice against the king-priestly monopoly of Lord Jagannath, Brahmin monopoly of knowledge as well as the social disabilities of shudras. Four of them were Shudras or more generally speaking non-Brahmins. Their movement should not be characterized as a non-Brahmin movement against the Brahmins. But it was launched against Brahminism, a concept which signified claim of a privileged position by a narrow group based on prescriptive rights and upholding a society based on exploitation, domination and discrimination. It is also noteworthy that Jagannath Das, the author of "Oriya Bhagabat" being a Brahmin joined this movement. Jagannath Das was the son of Bhagaban Das, a Puran Panda by profession and a resident of Kapileshwarpur sasan in Puri district.⁵⁰ Of course, all of them renounced their caste or original surnames and adopted the surname "Dasa" (the servant of God).

The main object of their protest was the establishment of a society based on equality and justice. The

49. Ibid., p. 2.

50. S.N. Dash, "Atibadi Jagannath Das", B.M. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., 1982, p. 117. Also vide his Oriya Sahitya Itihas, vol. 1, Berhampur, 1968, p. 585.

common tenor of their assertion was that one could be high or low according to his quality or merit but never on the basis of birth or social origins. Balaram Das, the eldest among the five associates, championed the cause of the Shudras at the Muktimandap. He challenged the Orthodox Brahmins and proved that the Shudras were in no way inferior to them in jnana or knowledge. Once there was a debate in Muktimandap between Balabhadra Rajguru and Purandar on a metaphysical problem. The debate became fierce and nobody could give a proper answer. Balaram Das who was present there, dressed as a Brahmin, stood up and solved the issue. But his real identity was soon revealed and he was taken to task by the pundits for participating in the debate. The Brahmins rebuked him in harsh language and said that he had no right to listen to and participate in Vedanta discussion, being a shudra.⁵¹ The king on the appeal of the priests imprisoned Balaram Das. But he finally passed the test when next morning he put his hands on the head of Haridas, a deaf-mute who recited Vedanta unhesitatingly.⁵² The

51. "Ta shuni bipre kale kali,
bahuta dele mote gali.
Tu Somanath Shudra suta,
Tu kahu Vedanta Charita.
To Chhar mudha, hina jana,
Tu Kahu Vedanta Vidhana"- Vedanta sar Gupta Gita by
Balaram Das.

52. Balaram Das, Ibid., Cuttack, p. 12.

kind and the priests were surprised and they freed Balaram Das. The poet Balaram Das was interested in acquiring knowledge and on another occasion, he tried to listen to the Brahmavidya-discussion by the pundits. He was caught and again he was confined to the jail. The king, Prataprudradev himself then listened the analysis of Gita from Balaram Das and was pleased very much. This story has been described by the poet himself in his "Gita Avakash".⁵³ The poet's challenge was conspicuous and he declared before the king that all have the right to acquire knowledge and only the Brahmins cannot monopolise it. Thus he wrote,

"Brahman manankar Vidya ehi eka je nuhain,
Bhagat ku agochar aba achhi Kahin".

The cult of Bhakti was also gradually spreading in the society. From the works of the saint Balaram Das i.e. "Bhaba Samudra" and "Luxmi Puran" the bhakti (love and devotion) of poet himself and an untouchable woman Shriya is conspicuous by which way the God and Goddess were pleased with them. The story runs like this: once there was a car festival in Puri and bhakta Balaram Das was madly

53. "Brahmanamane dekhine Kaleka katala,
Boile Brahmavidya shunilu tu ~~ch~~hara
Bhagaban jaha purbe Adityanku kahi,
Se gita sunilu tu Shudramuni hoi.
Swana hoi charu anna bhunjilu pamar,
Thakuranku janaiba bege yaku dhara" - Gita Avakasha.
By Balaram Das

rushing over to climb the car and to have a darshan of Lord Jagannath. But he was not allowed and was driven out by the orthodox Brahmins. In desperation Balaram went to the sea-shore, where he made three cars of sand and worshipped them. Surprisingly, that three original cars of Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra stopped. Nobody could know the reason. The king Prataprudradev was deeply worried and he saw a dream that night that the God had gone to the sand-car of the bhakta, Balaramdas. There was also an instruction to the king to invite Balaram Das to the original car of Lord Jagannath and then could it move. Lord Jagannath also told the king, "He will go there wherever his devotee does go and it will be ever true in the world".⁵⁴

His other work, Luxmi Puran, was a crusade against untouchability and discrimination on the basis of caste. It preaches the triumph of love and devotion. The Puran describes the visit of Luxmi to Sriya's house, a candal woman and her banishment by Lord Jagannath and Baladev. Lord Jagannath and Baladev felt tortured at the departure of Laxmi and at last they accepted the ideology of Laxmi i.e. social egalitarianism. Lord Jagannath and Baladev

54. "Bhakat mora jiba jene,
Muhin nischay jibi tene,"
Vide Bhakta Kabi Rama Das, Dardhyata Bhakti,
vol.1, Cuttack, ch. XIV, pp. 107-117.

were the upholders of caste hierarchy and Luxmi had insisted on inner purity only. In the end, victory came to the Shudras through Luxmi. Luxmi Puja has been a very popular festival in every house of Orissa since time immemorial. It is still current in Orissa. The Luxmi Puran of Balaram Das is read on that day in every Oriya house and is listened to with love and devotion.

Balaram Das was a believer in Jnan and bhakti. The philosophy of knowledge-cum-devotion was the weapon wielded by him to influence both the masses and the classes. As is well known, he was born in a Shudra family and because of that he was discriminated against a number of times. He himself has acknowledged in his Ramayan that he was born in a Shudra family at the command of God.⁵⁵

Matta (mad) Balaram and Siddha Balaram were not the same person. They may belong to the period of Gajapati Prataprudradev, but because of the difference of their mothers' name it cannot be considered that they were same. One Balaram Das's mother was Jambudevi, who was the son of Somanath Mohapatra, the minister of Prataprudradev. But in Ramayan, Balaram Das has written that his mother was

55. "Muhin Balaram Das Ramayan abatare thili,
Dihudi dharina mun samasta dekhili.
Mote ajna dele martya puraku jibu,
Kalijuge Shudramuni hoina janamibu".

Manamaya. It seems that this Balaram who wrote Ramayan was different.⁵⁶ Suryanarayan Dash also says that matta Balaram and Balaram, who wrote Ramayan, were not same but different.⁵⁷ However, there might be many Balaram Dasas in sixteenth century Orissa, but there was one Balaram Das, the prominent associate among the Panchsakhas who struggled and triumphed against the Brahminism.

Balaram Das was highly respected by the Bengal Vaishnavas. Bhaktakabi Devakinandan Das has written in respect of him-

"Bande Udiya Balaram Das Mohasay,
Jagannath Balaram Jar bamsha hay."

From "Brahmanda Bhugol" and "Vedanta sara Gupta Gita" of Balaram Das it is known that he was the contemporary of the king Prataprudradev. In the 17th anka (1509-10 A.D.) of Gajapati Prataprudradev, it is mentioned that "Vedanta-sara Gupta Gita" was written by Balaram Das.⁵⁸ He was thirty when the Ramayan was completed by him. Moreover,

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56. Nana Das, Anakar Samhita. Please see Pathani Pattanayak, "Siddhakabi Balaram Das" in B.M. Mohanty (ed), Orissare Sadhusantha, vol.I, Cuttack 1982, p. 105.
57. S.N. Dash, Oriya Sahityar Itihas, vol.I, 1968, pp. 492-95. Vide M. Nayak, Oriya Sahitya Samkshipta Itihas, Cuttack, 1982, p. 68.
58. "Rudra anshare Gajapati,
Prataprudra je nrupati
Tahar Saptadasha anke,
Makar mase sukla pakshe" -

Balaram Das continued an important characteristic of Sarala Das i.e. writing in simple regional language through which the common man would be able to understand the dharma shastras and analyse them. He wrote many Puranas and treatises, among which the Ramayan and Luxmi Puran were the most popular.⁵⁹

Jagannath Das was the most celebrated poet of the sixteenth century Orissa. He is one of the prominent figures of the Panchasakhas and is also popularly remembered for his unique contribution to Oriya literature i.e. Bhagabat. The Oriya Bhagabat generated a new consciousness and helped in breaking down the pride and traditional outlook of the orthodox Brahmin pundits. Some critics have called him the "Martin Luther" of Orissa.⁶⁰

A Bengali critic Bijaya Chandra Majumdar, writes in his "A Typical Selections from Oriya Literature", "I can not too highly speak of what Jagannath Das has done to raise his countrymen to a higher level of moral existence. No poet of old time enjoys so much of popularity as poet Jagannath Das does.... There is not a single Hindu village where at least a portion of Jagannath Das's Bhagabat is not

59. "Janamaru murkha muje alapa bayasa,
Grantha kala belaku bayasa tirisa" - Jagmohan Ramayan
(Uttarakanda)

60. S.N. Dash, "Atibadi Jagannath Das", B.M. Mohanty
(ed), op. cit., vol.I, 1982, p. 117.

kept and daily recited... when the people learnt that the Bhagabat which is the most sacred of all sacred books, was within their easy reach, the people took the study of vernacular with uncommon zeal and energy. This is why the art of reading and writing is known and practised by the common people more extensively in Orissa than in Bengal." Moreover, two eminent authorities in the field of education in the 19th century have traced the cause of wide literacy in Orissa to the popularity of Bhagavat.⁶²

"Atibadi" Jagannath Das was born in 1487 A.D. at Kapileshwar Pur Sasan, Puri, during the reign of the Gajapati Kapilendradev. His father was Bhagwan Das, a Puran Panda by profession, and his mother was Padmavati. Padmavati was a lady with a deep religious instinct and it is said that because of her keen interest in listening to puran that Jagannath Das made up his mind to translate the Sanskrit Bhagavat into Oriya. Jagannath Das earned enough knowledge at his early age in Philosophy, vedas, vedantas and in Oriya and Sanskrit literatures. Everyday he went to the Srimandir with his father and, sitting down near the Bata Ganesh, he used to discuss Purans, Shastras, Vedantas and other important metaphysical discourses with a large number of people. He was completely indifferent towards the worldly desires and later decided to adopt sanyas.

61. N. Das, Autobiography of Pt. Nilakanth Das, Cuttack, 1963, p. 34.

In 1500 A.D. there was a significant meeting between Jagannath Das and Sri Chaitanya at the temple premises of Lord Jagannath. He was deeply impressed by the work of Jagannath Das and his intellectual discourses on metaphysical matters. Therefore, Sri Chaitanya called him "Atibadi" or the "very great". The Bengali Vaishnavas were enraged at the title of "atibadi" to Jagannath Das. Chaitanya was very calm and replied, "The sand, stone, wood and trees of this land are equal to Gods. Comparatively the dignity of man is so high that it is beyond imagination and therefore it is correct to address Jagannath Das "atibada".⁶² He further advised, "Be small like grasses and tolerate all like trees. Be pleased in respect and don't be sorry in hate. Then you will be a pure Vaishnav. And remember, the devotion is destroyed in discrimination."⁶³

Besides the Bhagavat, Jagannath also composed number of philosophical and devotional treatises in the language of the common people of Orissa. Mruguni stuti, Gaiastuti, Gundicha Vijay, Arthkoil and Tulabhina are very popular among them. Apart from this it is known that he composed

62. S.N. Dash, Oriya Sahityar Itihas, vol.I, Cuttack, 1979, p. 463.

63. "Truna prayeka nicha heba,
Taru praya sarba sahiba.
Manyare ananda hoiba,
Amanye duksha na kariba,
Tebe Vaishnav Sidhi hoi,
Bhedare bhakti nasha jai."

Quoted from S.N. Das, ibid., p. 463, Vide
C.R. Das, op. cit., p.80.

sixty treatises in Oriya. Long ago Bhudev Mukherjee, an Inspector of Schools had written in his report, "It is beyond description what Jagannath Das has done for the moral upliftment of Oriya people. No ancient poet has been so popular as atibadi Jagannath is. There is no Hindu village in Orissa where the Bhagabat is not preserved or recited." In fact, the Bhagavat mostly helped in socialisation and moral development of young minds. From its various stanzas the fragrance of love and devotion,⁶⁴ morality and social egalitarianism,⁶⁵ and the philosophy of Void⁶⁶ became conspicuous.

Jagannath Das also became a victim of the orthodox Sanskrit speaking Brahmins, because of the popularity of his Oriya Bhagabat. The Sanskrit pundits gradually lost their importance as the common people turned to study and understand the Bhagabat and other Purans by themselves and they no more required the help of Brahmins. The Pundits,

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64. "Bhakati joga sadhyakari, Bhabu bhakate janti tari.
Jogie joga marge bhrami, Futi huanti Pathashrami.
Sakal Karmabal teja, sarba sampurne mote bhaja.
Sakal bhute base mora, saraba antar bahar". - Bhagavat.
65. Amruta binay bachan, kahi toshiba prani mana.
Sakal dehe narayan, basanti Anadi karan.
Martya mandale deha bahi, Debata hoile marai.
Dhana karpunya seba phale, kiba asadhya Mahitale. -
Bhagavat.
66. Mahasunya je jyotirupa, Jyotiru jata thula rupa,
Thularu ardhamatra kala, Matraru omkar janmila
Omkar brahma e jagat, Shuna Parbati dei chitta.
- Tulabhina.

therefore, became deadly jealous of Jagannath Das and lodged a complaint against him on a charge of abduction of a woman.⁶⁷ The pundits alleged that Jagannath Das was a magician and by virtue of his mantras he was attracting a larger number of women than men. The time would come when all women would be running after him leaving their own husbands. This complaint against Jagannath Das led to his imprisonment by King Prataprudradev. It is a fact that a large number of his women devotees caused trouble for him. Finally he was released when he proved that he had half the body of a woman.⁶⁸

Chaitanya took a negative view of women. He considered women as the representatives of sex to constitute a dangerous force capable of moving saint from his chosen path, or of upsetting the balance in society. Women, had therefore, to be kept under control. Because of this, Chaitanya did not allow any woman to see him. He also did not allow his disciples to have any sort of social relations with women. But the poet Jagannath Das believed in social

67. "Jene dekhai naribrunda, Ke kahu tahar ananda.
Tahin basina Kare gita, halai munda tara hasta.
Artha kahai nana mate, Stirinku mohiba nimante".
- Jagannath Charitamrita.

68. S.N. Dash, "Atibadi Jagannath Das", B.M. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., vol.I, 1982, p. 124.

and cultural upliftment of women and therefore, made a number of women disciples. He discussed the various dharmashastras and Puranas with them. This egalitarian attitude of Jagannath Das aroused jealousy among the Brahmins.

Achyutananda Das was also one of the distinguished figures of the Panchasakha movement. He was born in 1482 A.D. (during the 21st anka of Purushottamdev) at the Nembal village on the river bank of Mahanadi in Cuttack district. His father was Dinabandhu Mohanty and mother Padmavati.⁶⁹ There is a controversy regarding the birth or caste of Achyut. Dr. Ratnakar Chaini has proved that Agani, Achyuta, Gopal (milk-man) Achyuta, Kaivarta Achyut, Kamar (Blacksmith) Achyuta and dina (poor) Achyuta are one person. Achyutananda has identified himself as Karan.⁷⁰

69. S.N. Dash, op. cit., Cuttack, 1978, p. 498, Vide K. Pathisharma, "Mahapurush Achyutananda", B.M. Mohanty (ed), ibid., p. 140.

70. Mora Pitamah se Gopinatha
 Mohanti tahanka ate Padhita.
 Shrikshetre Chhamukaran se thile,
 Chhamu ajnare se dina katile.
 Tahanka putra mora pita honti,
 Shrikshetre khuntia kama karanti.
 Pratap nrupati santosha honte,
 Khuntia Pada dile mora tate.
 Tahun Dinabandhu Khuntia hele,
 Nilachalre je seba khatile.

- Varnatika, pp. 50-53 by Achyutananda Das.

The Poet Achyutananda was the contemporary of the King Prataprudradev. His grand father was one of the Private Secretaries (Chhamu karan) of the king. His father was Dinabandhu Khuntia and this title Khuntia was conferred upon him by the king. But the poet recognizes himself as a Shudra, as is known from various of his works.⁷¹ Achyutananda was also recognized as a Gopal (milk-man) and Kaivarta (fisher-man or boatman) for his writings i.e. Gopal Ogala and Kaivarta Gita. His family was very poor when he was born. He has described the poor plight of his home.⁷² Because of his poverty he called himself dina (pauper) Achyuta.

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71. a) "Nahin mohar bipra varne asha,
Kshatriya Vaishyare nahin bharasa,
Sana hele mana saru huai,
Tahun Achyuta je shudra bolai.
Shudra varnare seba prapta hoye,
Ahankar nahin shudrara dehe.
(Varna Samhita, pp. 93)
- b) Shudra Kulare mu hoibi jata,
Nama hoiba mo dina Achyuta.
(Harivamsha, Patal Khanda)
- c) Shudra madhye ganana muhita atai
Diksha goti paiachhi gopakule thai".
(Harivamsha, 7th Khanda)
72. "Tilakanare Mun janama lavili kehi na janile more,
Agani ta boli mata dakhuchananti anna na milai ghare.
(Sunya Samhita, Ch. 18)

Achyutananda Das was a critic of the contemporary society, a devotee, a meditator and a saint. Using his foresight he had predicted what the future would turn out to be. To a large extent his words have come true. Not only Achyutananda, but even his other contemporary writer colleagues were predicting the end of the worse days and the arrival of the Satyajuga (the era of truth) in the world. The continuous attack of the Muslims on Orissa and the prevalence of a high degree of indiscipline in social and religious life had made them predict the future this way. Apart from this, an examination of his personal life and his literary activities reveals that Achyutananda was a rebel. Though, he believed in caste, based on Karma (action or merit), yet he dreamt of a caste-less and class-less society. His Baran Charita Gita was written in keeping with this outlook.⁷³

The complete treatise of "Barancharita Gita" is a conversation between Achyutananda and the disciple, Ramachandra Das. From an analysis of this Gita it is learnt that there was a difference between Achyutananda and Sri Chaitanya. Chaitanya was a protagonist of the Nadiya Kirtan but Achyutananda started the Rahas Kirtan in Jhankar. Chaitanya propagated the Krishnalila of the Sharat Rasa

73. R.K. Chaini (ed), Achyutananda Gitavali, Cuttack, 1983, p. 11.

of Autumn whereas Achyuta introduced the Basanta Rasa of the spring. Chaitanya discussed the association of Krishna with the Gopis, but Achyuta wrote of the heroic deeds of Krishna in association with the Gopals (young milk-men of Gopa).⁷⁴ In spite of these differences, Achyutananda had a profound respect for Sri Chaitanya and was one of his distinguished disciples. The social differences between Sri Chaitanya and Achyutananda are very clear from various of their activities. Sri Chaitanya emphasized on love and devotion as the medium of worship, whereas Achyutananda advocated the theory of deeds or karma. It seems that Achyutananda wanted to symbolise his philosophy of karma with the masses and the classes as well.

Achyutananda travelled over many parts of Orissa for the propagation of his faith and outlook. Because of his profound experience of the wretched plight of the poor and the exploitation of the subjects by the state machinery, he criticized authoritarianism. His writings exemplify protest against injustice and exploitation. He compared the subjects with dead bodies and the kings with vultures. According to him it was a curse for the subjects to undergo this suffering. Again he postulated that the kings would snatch away the properties of the subjects and the subjects

74. Ibid., p. 13.

would flee away to the forest. He also desired not to live to see the sorry plight of others.⁷⁵ The writings of Achyutananda were based on his social experiences and he had an outlook created by his own experience. Thus, the anti-feudal feeling has been clearly expressed in writings of Achyutananda Das.

Achyutananda travelled to a number of pilgrim centres like Gaya, Ayodhya, Mathura, Mayapuri, Kashi, Brindaban, Magadh, Mithila, Dwaraka, Dhanuskoti, Madurai and Kamaksha. He came into contact with some fraudulent sanyasis and criticizing them he said that nobody could be a meditator only because they had beards and long hair. According to him determination, meditation, honesty and truthfulness were the essential characteristics of a sanyasi. He also had a quarrel with the Brahmins of Puri. He vehemently challenged the validity of the authority of Brahmins and the philosophical basis of the taking of cows in donation by them. He also asked a number of metaphysical questions relating to cow, the mother Goddess, and wanted to know from the priests whether they were Brahmins or Shudras?

75. "Paraja murdar hebe Rajae Saguna,
 Bharathara sanya eje hoichhi ghuruna/1032/
 Anyayeman hoiba bipolarita jata,
 Raja chhinenebe sabu parajara bitta,
 Bikala hoina bane pasibe se jai,
 Podu mohar peta ki karibi rahi/1034/

How did they emerge? Which God were they worshipping everyday and whether dharma is a result of Karma (action) or vice versa, i..e. Karma is a result of dharma?⁷⁶ The king and Brahmins were, in fact, surprised and had to perforce acknowledge his greatness.

The poet had also not forgotten to present the contemporary social picture even at the time of his discussion of Pinda (body) and brahmande (world) philosophy. He had predicted revolution and change. He believed that first there would be a hole in the West and four Commanders would be killed. The nayaks of the fort would be flogged

76. "Dana ghenā tumbhe jebana gai,
 Kete akshar ta padare thai?
 Singa nasa karna lalat kie?
 Langude basai kebana dien?
 Kete aksharare loma nirmana?
 Kete akshar khunta pagha jana?
 Keun aksharare gabaku bandha?
 Keun aksharere batsaku chhanda?
 Chhabisa boli sayale prakash;
 Ethu atha bhalā karina ghosha?
 Atha Kariachhi tini nirman,
 Tiniru ekatra karina jana.
 Chabish akshar debara mata,
 Kahun janamla keun debata?
 Swarga Martya patala tini bata,
 Kahin lagiachhi keun kabata?
 Kebana prakare kilichhi kie?
 Joda die taku kebana dien?
 Suna he Brahmane ete byabastha.
 Achyuti Dasaku lagichhi byatha.
 Ahe biprasuta puchhe Achyut.
 Bipra ki Shudra kaha he tadanta.
 Kahun aila kahun tumbha sthiti?
 Kebana debata pujuchha niti?
 Kathae puchhiba na kara tama,
 Karmaru dharma ki dharmaru karma?"

: Bipra Chalak, Quoted from K. Pathisharma,
 B.M. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., p. 148.

and the people would be frightened and thus they would run away. According to him the fort was constructed as a result of the service and sufferings of the people. There would then be a large crowd in eighteen drains, and it would be a great problem when there would be a fighting between archers and gunmen.⁷⁷

Achyutananda accepted disciples from all castes. Among his disciples Ramadas was a potter, another Rama was a black-smith while Nanda and Naran were black-smiths. There were twelve disciples prominent among them. From the Gurubhakti Gita of the poet it is known that he had sixteen thousand disciples.⁷⁸ He neither liked nor advised the study of the bhaktisunya literature.

He was a patriot and humanist. He loved Utkal very much. His writings in vernacular enlightened the rural mass. It is remarkable that he was very much sympathetic towards the depressed section of the society. He enlightened the path of salvation for the poor and sufferers

77. "Prathame Padiba pachhime thana,
Chari paika je khaiba hana,
Gadara nayake khaibe chabuk,
Palaibe jane bhaya apara.
Jana aratare janam gada,
Athar nalare padiba bhida,
Banua dhanuki jujha lagithiba
Sunaina deba triveni dhara".

: Tane Bhaja Rama nama
pp. 2-3.

78. Gurubhakti Gita, Part II, Prachi, Bhubaneswar, 1970 (Preface).

through his Sunyapuran and Mahamantra. He emphasized writings in regional languages and held them in the same worth as other Sanskrit works.

Jashovanta Das was also one of the reformers of the sixteenth century orissa. He was born in the Adhanga village near the Jagatsinghpur sub-division of Cuttack district. It is known from the "Udaya Kahani" of Achyutananda that Jagannath Das and Jashovanta Das were born in the same year. Balaram Das was four years senior to them. If we were to believe "Uday Kahani", Jashovant Das was born in 1487 A.D.⁷⁹ His father was Jagu Mallik and mother, Rekha Devi. Jashovanta became indifferent towards the world while he was twelve years of age. He was determined to be a sanyasi. Since his early age Jashovanta used to travel over many parts of India and lastly returned to Puri. Before his return to Puri, Sri Chaitanya had already arrived in Orissa.

Jashovanta Das composed many devotional songs. Among them "Premabhakti Brahmagita", "Govinda Chandra Gita" "Siva Svaraday", "Chaurashi Ajna", "Hetu Uday Bhagavat" and Rasa, etc. are important.

79. B.M. Mohanty, "Mahapurush Jashovanta Das", B.M. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., p. 130, Vide, S.N. Dash, op.cit., pp. 492-93.

In ancient India Yoga was one of the valuable ingredients of Indian culture. Jashovanta was a prominent Yogi and he wrote a number of methods of yoga in his "Siva Svaraday". His language was very simple and intelligible to all. A number of data of the contemporary yoga methods are available from his books. He also propagated the knowledge-cum-devotion ideology among the people and discussed the philosophy, ethics and principles of nirakar brahma (formless God) anakar (formlessness) and Omkar. The relation between the soul and the great soul (Paramatma) was also investigated by him.⁸⁰ The philosophical aspects of the universe, sun, moon, stars, wind and the sky have been described by him, and he says that there are eight flutes of the nityalok i.e. God of Gods. He liked Orissa very much and said that Neelachal Purushottam Kshetra was a rare place in the universe.⁸¹

The picture of the contemporary society, family and the eternal love between the mother and son are to be found in his book, "Tika Govindachandra". It deals with the tradition of social behaviour in human society. Mother Mukta Devi taught her son, the king Govindachandra, as the requirement of social behaviour, at the time of his

80. P.M. Mohanty, op. cit., pp. 130-33.

81. Ibid., p. 131.

departure to practice the ascetic order. Sacrifice was given a higher position than enjoyment. Another important thing "The Govinda Chandra Tika" preaches is that the gurus should be accepted irrespective of caste, creed and colour, if he were to possess real knowledge. The king, Govindachandra had worshipped his guru Hadipa, who was a sweeper by caste.⁸² This Gita emphasised knowledge or merit than status based on birth or caste.

"Govindchandra Gita" was one of the valuable works which preached equality, respect of teachers irrespective of caste and the necessity of determination to control one's desire. In fact, it is a lesson for the society for all times to come. Apart from this, Jashovanta Das also protested against the existing norms of domination and discrimination. According to him meditation and devotion to God can never be monopolised by a particular caste or community, it is open to all mankind. Very often he mentioned his discontent in his writings.⁸³

Bhaktakabi Jashovanta was a contemporary of the Gajapati, Prataprudradev and was a close associate of Sri Chaitanya in the propagation of the bhakti cult.⁸⁴

82. Ibid.

83. S.N. Dash, op. cit., 1978, p. 495.

84. S. Ratha, "Bhaktakabi Jashovanta Das" B. Mohanty (ed), Konark: Panchasakha Special, 1971, pp. 442-444.

His "Govindachandra Gita" is so much popular in Orissa that even yogis used to sing it at the time of their begging from door to door. The rural mass are quite aware of the implications of this Gita.

Last but not least, was Shishu Ananta Das, one of the associates of Panchasakha. He was born in 1486 A.D. in the Balipatana village, near Bhubaneswar of Puri District. His father was kapil Mohanty and mother Gauri Devi.⁸⁵

He was a contemporary of king Prataprudradev and was an associate of Sri Chaitanya. The Garuda-keshav Sambad, Thikabhar, Agat-Bhabisya malia, Arthatareni, Chumbaka Malika, Bhakti-juktidayak Gita, Anakar Sabat, Dibi Dibi Dhola, Pinda Brahamand Gita and Hetu Uday Bhagabat were important among his writings. But the "Hetu Uday Bhagabat" was the most important in which he described the implications of the gurumahima, panchamana and Pachis Prakriti and also defined the philosophy of the creation of the universe, chauda Brahmanda (14 worlds), Gayatri tattva; Pinda Brahmanda Tattva and abdhut charit, etc. His predictions regarding the future of the society was simple and was understood in vernacular by the common man.

85. B. Sahu, "Hetu Uday Bhagabat", B. Mohanty (ed), ibid., 1971, p. 429, vide D.S. Pattanak, "Mahapurush Shishu Ananta Das", B.M. Mohanty (ed), op.cit., 1982, p. 136.

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Ananta Das was also one of the exponents of the Bhakti cult. He asked his devotees to submit their mind and soul to the God just as a wife submits herself to her husband.⁸⁶ This was the way of bhakti and the method to achieve the consciousness of the Supreme God, Vishnu. Apart from this he propagated that God has no colour and is avarna.⁸⁷ According to him everything depends on mana (mind or motive). God is inside the mind or heart, and not inside the temple.⁸⁸ The control of mind is real meditation. From the foregoing discussion it is remarkably clear that Ananta Das did not recognize the worship of God by priests. He personified that system of worship which is mental and is in the realm of thought.

Earlier we have discussed how Lord Jagannath was the linchpin of society and also how the panch-sakhas struck against the different props of the said society. The question arises, therefore, is why did they spare Jagannath?

86. "Manaku stiri besha kari,
Hoiba nabina kishori.

* * *

Tahinre manaku nibeshi
Dekhibe jyotirmay rashi.
Jyoti antara dibyarupa,
Dekhiba nila je svarupa". (Hetu Uday Bhagabat).

87. "Arekha abarna atai,
Abarna barna se nuhani". Ibid.

88. "Manara Kalpanati Kala,
Bedhi rahichhi bindu sthala.

Even most of them had prayed to Jagannath at the initial stage of their writings. Very often they also claimed to have been born by the grace of Lord Jagannath.⁸⁹ Here we should not forget that originally Jagannath was a tribal deity and it was only from the thirteenth century onwards that he underwent the process of Brahminization. This must surely have been disliked by the Shudras or non-Brahmins who often tried to project Him as a God of the Little tradition. It was proved by the version of Sarala Das in his Mahabharat that Jagannath was being worshipped by a Shabar Viswavasu in the form of Nilamadhav.⁹⁰ Balaram Das⁹¹ and other Panchasakhas have also characterized Lord Jagannath as a deity of the little tradition.⁹² Luxmi Puran of Balaram Das is also another evidence in which Luxmi got a declaration social equality and a casteless society by Lord Jagannath himself. So it appears that the tirade was not so much against Jagannath as it was against the metamorphosis that they (panchasakhas) experienced in the course of time. Apart from this, when Lord Jagannath had

89. Dibakar Das, Jagannath Charitamrida, 1963, p. 12.

90. A.B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., 1968, pp.208-27.

91. Balaram Das, Bhava Samudra, Cuttack, 1972, p. 23.

92. B.M. Padhi, "Panchasakha Sahityare Shree Jagannath", B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., 1971, pp. 85-93.

been so popular as the sovereign-deity of Orissa, it was wise on the part of the Panchasakhas to use him to mould the rest of the society. One could well argue that had Jagannath continued as a deity of the Great tradition, the majority of the people in Oriya society, who were no doubt Shudras, would have been alienated themselves from him and possibly might have set up a deity of their own. In that case the status of the state deity would have been lost to Jagannath.⁹³ From the foregoing discussion, it is now clear that cleavage ended in cohesion. Jagannath, the central pivot in Oriya socio-religious life, who was a deity of the king and the priests, now occupied a place in mass consciousness because of the lofty efforts of the Panchasakhas.

The Panchasakhas were believers of the Nirguna school of philosophy. Still they have not denied the deities and at the same time they have also described all idol worshipping as zealotry, a zeal that stops at the idols. The idols are the means, the media; goal is the realization of God, realization of self and nothing less than that. Though admitting of all names, Balaram Das says in the mouth of God himself: "I rest only in the Mahasunya, which is a region beyond all name, I have no

93. R.K. Das, op. cit., p. 345.

name in my essence, I am the nameless Brahman".⁹⁴

The Panchasakha have also warned us that without the guru coming to help, one cannot know the real truth in the world. But as in everything else, the Panchasakhas have revolted against the idea of making an idol of the guru. A guru who encourages helpless dependence and makes an idol of himself, will be more a hindrance than a help according to Panchasakhas.⁹⁵ The Panchasakhas were determined to start a mass movement in the society for a change in outlook and attitude. Having personified the system of worship, they said one could not see God only in the temple, one could feel Him inside one's heart also.⁹⁶ At the height of the feeling of high and low, caste and untouchability, their struggle was successful in raising the egalitarianism for the masses. Achyutananda did not acknowledge the definition of the origin of the Varnas i.e. Brahmans from the mouth, and Shudras from the feet of the God. He said that Vaishyas were the eyes, Kshtriyas the ears, Brahmans the breath of the nose and the Shudras

94. "Mohar sunyare bishram,
Se tharu kahu achhi nama.
Mati sandeha lagila,
Kahunti nama jata heta."
Bhakta says "Tohara rupa fekha nahin,
Sunya Purusha Sunya dehi". Viratgita.

95. C.R. Das, op:cit., New Delhi, p. 21.

96. G. Misra, "Orissara Dharmiya Chetanaku Panchasakhanaka Abadan", B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., 1971, p. 262.

the face as a whole. These four varnas were created from a flame.⁹⁷

The Panchasakhas had come at a time when the people were engaged in all sorts of rituals, showing off, in a bid to beat one another as it were. The learned men kept trumpeting their shastric references and particular sects were allowed to flaunt all their enteralis because they could get the patronization of the king. In spite of this, the Panchasakha literature and philosophy flourished as a result of the culture and patronage of the court. They emphasised upon right attitude, readiness and receptivity . In tune with the Indian mystic saints all over India in the middle ages, the Panchasakhas proclaimed that the liberalizing knowledge is in our hearts itself, we have to search for it, grow up to it and translate it into life. They have declared that knowledge of the Divine is not at all a remote thing, but it is in the very temple, that is in each one of us.

97. "Vaishya to nayan atai,
Kshatriya Shrabanaku kahi,
Brahmana nasara paban,
Shudra je mukhare pramana:
Emante charijati kahi,
Jyoti madhyaru janma hoi" : Gupta Gita.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAMKIRTAN MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The advent of Sri Chaitanya to Orissa signified a remarkable change in the socio-religious life of its inhabitants. His philosophy successfully conquered the tide of the prevailing religious ethos. He arrived in 1510 A.D. and stayed for eighteen years in Puri. His propagation of the new faith, based on social equality and universal brotherhood, was cherished with great reverence by millions. In every important village his name was chanted and the sacred literatures of Vaishnavas were read out and explained to the masses in a spirit of fervent devotion. Although Bengal was the birth place of this new creed of love, it had a strong hold in Orissa for many centuries. In Bengal it could not attain an equal widespread popularity owing to the opposition offered by the people of the Sakta cult.⁹⁸ Apart from this, the rule of Sultan Hussain Shah did not offer a congenial atmosphere for its propagation.⁹⁹

It was not that, the cult of bhakti and Radha Krishna were quite unknown in Orissa before the arrival of Sri

98. N. Vasu (ed), Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanja, vol.I, Calcutta, 1911, pp. XCVIII-XCIX.

99. D.K. Mukherjee, Chaitanya, NBT, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 11-15.

Chaitanya. There were several instances of Krishna worship and pre-Chaitanya Vaishnavism in Orissa. In the 11th century, Chodagangadev was the patron of Vaishnavism and Jaidev, the most celebrated poet of the period composed the Gita Govinda, which was widely considered as a perennial source of the Radha-Krishan cult. Gajapati Purushottamdev, the father of king Prataprudradev, was credited with the composition of several hymns, which clearly indicated the worship of Krishna and his sportive pranks with the Gopis. That Krishna worship was quite extensive can be ascertained from the existence of the Gopinath temple at Ramuna, as a main centre for Krishna worship.¹⁰⁰ However, the cult of Radha-Krishna and the propagation of bhakti really gained momentum and received mass support during the period of Chaitanya.

Great has been the influence exercised by Vaishnavism on the minds of the people - so much so that it has even penetrated into the inner most recesses of the country. To be able to understand this we should begin by giving a brief account of the life and teachings of Sri Chaitanya, who founded Vaishnavism on an altogether new basis. His association with the Panchasakhas and the patronage of

100. Ibid., pp. 39-40, Vide P. Mukherjee, The History of the Medieval Vaishnavism in Orissa, p. 70 and B. Mohanty (ed), Konark, 1971 (Editorial).

Gajapati Prataprudradev stimulated the faith and confidence of the people and accelerated the progress of his teachings.

On the 18th February of the year 1486, corresponding to the Saka era 1407, Sri Chaitanya was born at Navadvipa or Nadia. The Bengal Vaishnavas reckon the commencement of the Chaitanya era to this date. There was a lunar eclipse at the time and pious men and women of the locality were taking bath in the Ganges and chanting hymns, as they often do on such occasions. Chaitanya's father, Jagannath Mishra, was a pious Vaishnav given to scholarly pursuits. His mother, Sachi Devi, was also deeply religious. They were a family of modest means.

In the year 1510, when he was in his 24th year, Chaitanya renounced the world and entered the holy order of sanyasins. From that day he came to be known in history as Sri Krishna-Chaitanya or simply Sri Chaitanya. On taking the vow of an ascetic his first act was to visit Vrindaban, the birth place of Sri Krishna. Returning from Vrindaban he set out for Orissa with a view to visit Lord Jagannath of Puri. The connection of his family with Utkal is of a much earlier date. It is stated in the old records that his ancestors were formerly residents of Jaipur from where they migrated to Sylhet in Bangladesh (then in Assam) owing to the oppression of Raja Bhramarbar.

From the latter place, his father came to, and settled in, Nadia.¹⁰¹ After he had taken the vow of sanyasin, he lived for 24 years, of which he spent only six years in visiting shrines in Northern and Southern India, and the remaining eighteen years in Orissa. His fervent devotion and religious ecstasy had a magnetic influence which drew thousands of admiring followers wherever he visited. His appearance was sober and gentle, besides, he was a great scholar.

All this charmed Prataprudradev, the then reigning king of Orissa, who considered him an incarnation of the deity. Indeed, he was revered by the people of Orissa as the living personality of Sri Jagannath of the Puri temple. His long residence of eighteen years produced a religious fervour and enthusiasm which can better be imagined than described. In the village of Pratap-pur, in Mayurbhanja, Gajapati Prataprudradev had an image of Sri Chaitanya made of nim wood. This example was emulated by the people, and now there is scarcely any important village in Orissa that has not got an image of Chaitanya for worship. Of all the images of Sri Chaitanya found in Orissa, the one

101. D.C. Sen, Chaitanya and His Companions, Calcutta, 1917, p. 219, Vide P. Mukherjee, The History of the Gajapati Kings of Orissa, Cuttack 1981, p. 100, N. Vasu, op. cit., P.C. and D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 4.

discovered at Pratap-pur is the oldest, having been made during the life time of the Master.¹⁰²

After a wide religious tour of the different shrines of India and his consequent coming in contact with different scholars, Chaitanya formulated his own ideas about Vaishnavism. These ideas later served as the foundation of the Vaishnav system of philosophy, namely, the "Achintya-bhedabhed-Veda", associated with the Chaitanya school. This new Vaishnav school was an addition to the already existing similar schools, earlier founded by Ramanuja (11th-12th century), Nimbark (late 12th century), Madhavacharya (1197-1276 AD) and Vallabhacharya (born around 1481 AD). He completely differed from the ideology of Madhavacharya, who emphasised upon the observance of "Varnashramdharma", for following Vaishnav religion.¹⁰³ This disagreement was important and decisive for it further consolidated Chaitanya's own views. In fact, Chaitanya was in need of a more egalitarian social gospel for his proposed preaching work amidst the caste-ridden Hindu societies of Bengal and Orissa.

There were three principal centres for the propagation of Vaishnavism, inspired by Chaitanya. They were

102. N. Vasu, locus cit.

103. A.N. Chatterjee, "Sri Chaitanya and his Sect", PIHC, 1980, pp. 289-291.

Navadvipa in Bengal, Puri in Orissa and Vrindaban in Uttar Pradesh. Of the three, Orissa occupies an important position in the history of the Chaitanya cult. In assessing the role of Chaitanya in the history of Vaishnavism in Orissa, one thing should be borne in mind that Vaishnavism was prevalent in Orissa even before Chaitanya's arrival at Puri. It is interesting to note that there were two trends in the pre-Chaitanya Vaishnavism of Orissa. One was the purely devotional religion based on Krishna worship. The other was devotion, mixed with knowledge of Lord Jagannath, who was considered as Buddha. When Chaitanya began to propagate his faith, based on the cult of Radha-Krishna, the two previous Vaishnav trends were gradually absorbed into the main stream of the new Vaishnavism preached by him.¹⁰⁴ But the second one maintained its separate existence for some time even after Chaitanya.

Gajapati Prataprudradev was deeply impressed by Sri Chaitanya and he arranged accommodation for him in the Vakul math. Chaitanya was paid high homage and tribute by the king.¹⁰⁵ In course of time, the king, Prataprudradev, also embraced Gaudiya Vaishnavism preached by Sri Chaitanya and thus it became the official philosophy of the Vaishnav

104. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

105. Divakar Das, Jagannath Charitamrita, Canto 7, Vide P. Mukherjee, op. cit., 1979, p. 16.

movement in general, and flourished as court Vaishnavism. However, the king's initiation extended a special support and patronage to the new faith of Sri Chaitanya, and the other varieties of Vaishnavism came to be somewhat looked down upon and discriminated against. After the king was converted, the smaller vassal chiefs also took to the same line.¹⁰⁶ When a particular religion became the king's religion, it gathered a special glamour and thus had advantage over others. This new faith did not try to complement what was already there in native Vaishnav tradition in Orissa, it came as a superstructure, as it were, and took the day as a conquerer.

It was not long before Sri Chaitanya found a medium of externalizing his devotional fervour. He organized samkirtans invoking or praying to the deity through group-singing. These samkirtans became very popular. Groups participating in them became larger and larger with each passing day and soon they developed into nagar-samkirtans - mass singing in streets. These nagar-samkirtans, the singing orgies in which Chaitanya poured out his whole being, became a very effective vehicle for the propagation of his newly acquired faith. His worship of God in the form of Krishna found expression in his preaching of universal love. This was Chaitanya's message and mission. The

106. C.R. Das, op. cit., p. 62.

social context of Bengal Vaishnavism, as pronounced by Chaitanya, was the idea of the oneness of man in the eyes of God, and manifestation of bhakti in service, love and devotion in which barriers of caste lost all significance. This call of Chaitanya for universal, unmotivated love found expression in his sweet and enchanting Krishna songs in which multitudes avidly joined. Nama-sankirtan, introduced by Chaitanya, went a long way in popularizing the Vaishnav faith among the masses.¹⁰⁷

Of course, the movement of Sri Chaitanya gained strong political support, but it failed to win over a considerable orthodox section of the society. An influential section of the society led by the orthodox and proud scholars of Orissa remained in opposition to the neo-Vaishnavism propagated by Chaitanya. In their intellectual pride, they not only scorned and ridiculed the emotional Krishna-devotion, but also tried to obstruct its growth. On the other hand, Chaitanya wanted to effect a change of heart in them and to win them over to his faith of universal love and tolerance. According to Dr Mayadhar Mansingh, "The Brahmins are as a class intensely hostile to Chaitanyaism and some of its ceremonies even today. We find a bitter diatribe against

107. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 9

the Chaitanyan bhakti cult and its evil effect on Orissa's social life. It is typical of the general attitude of the Orissa intelligentsia. Many Brahmins in Orissa are hostile to the Chaitanyaian bhakti cult because it makes no discrimination between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins."¹⁰⁸

Chaitanya succeeded in making a large number of disciples, including Oriyas and non-Oriyas. Nityananda, Damodar Pundit, Mukunda Dutta and Jagadananda were prominent Bengali disciples who had accompanied him on his journey to Orissa.¹⁰⁹ In Orissa, apart from the Panchasakhas, many prominent persons became the follower of Sri Chaitanya. Ramananda Ray and Gopinath Badajena, respectively, the two Governors of Rajmohendry and Midnapur, had been ardent followers of the love cult of Radha and Krishna.¹¹⁰ Shikhi Mohanty and his sister Madhavi Dasi (being a woman she could not meet Chaitanya) were considered to be chosen followers. Other prominent Oriya Vaishnavas of the Gaudiya school were Ramananda's brothers and father, Bhavanand Pattanaik, Kanai Khuntia, Janardan Mohanty, Tulsi Parichha, Kesi Misra

108. M. Mansingh, History of Oriya Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1963, p. 39.

109. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

110. H.K. Mahetab, History of Orissa, vol.I, Cuttack, 1959, p. 328. Vide R.K. Das, Legenda of Jagannath, Puri, Bhadrakh, 1978, p. 94. According to Sri Chaitanya Charita mrita, Adi (ch. 10), Baninath Patanaik, Kalanidhi, and Sudhanidhi were also disciples of Sri Chaitnya, apart from Ramathoda Ray and Gopinath Badajena.

Pradyumna Misra and Krishnadasa. It is to be noted that except for the family of Ramanda and Pradyumna Misra, the rest were priests or scribes of the Jagannath temple.¹¹¹ Besides, there were a large number of followers of the Chaitanya sect specially drawn from the common mass of the society. Earlier the activities of sahajiya Vaishnavas had degraded Krishna and Radha to the position of a lover and beloved in the estimation of the common people. But due to the efforts of Gaudiya Vaishnavas the peasant folk began to entertain the idea of worshipping the dual image of Krishna and Radha as the Supreme God and his consort.¹¹² Besides this, the Radha-Krishna cult also became popular among the common people because of the birth of Lord Krishna in the house of Nanda, the milk mens" chief. The people therefore, embraced this cult without any second thought. It was also popularised by many vassal chiefs and zamindars when they worshipped the images of Radha and Krishna during the festival of Holi, with great pomp and grandeur. This tradition is still current in Orissa.

The association of Sri Chaitanya with the Panchasakhas is noteworthy. The Panchasakhas, of course, accepted

111. H.C. Das, Cultural Development in Orissa, Calcutta, 1985, p. 381, Vide, P. Mukherjee, op. cit., 1981, p. 101.

112. B. Das, "Development of Radha-Krishna Cult in Orissa", PIHC, vol.I, 1978, p. 542.

Chaitanya as their guru, received formal initiation from him, but that should not make us believe that they were representatives, each in his own characteristic way, of the long assimilated Vaishnav tradition of Orissa. They accepted Sri Chaitanya, when the latter came to Orissa on his pilgrimage, as a great leader and prophet of the Vaishnav faith. It must have caught the notice of the king on occasions that the Panchasakhas were not full-fledged followers of the official line and that they wanted to preserve their marks of distinction. He then thought of taking them to task and put them to various sort of tests. Jashovanta Das, one of the Panchasakhas mentions in one of his works that king Prataprudra subjected the Panchasakha to severe tests even in the very presence of Sri Chaitanya.¹¹³

From the perusal of the texts composed by like-minded Orissan Vaishnavs, their special mode of worship can be understood. They used to worship the formless Brahma with the Buddhist "yantra" and at the same time recited the Radha-Krishna mantras, along with the japa of the thirty-two later mantras. This doctrine was propagated in the Rasakrida of Jagannath Das, Vat Avakash and Virat Gita of Balaram Das, Siva Svaraday of Yoshovant Das and Anakar

113. C.R. Das, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

Samhita and Sunya Samhita of Achyutananda Das.¹¹⁴

In eastern India, the powerful movement organized by Chaitanya spread from Bengal to Orissa and Assam and went beyond, to the other parts of northern India and Deccan. The essence of Chaitanyaism is given in two sentences by Krishnadas, "if a creature adores Krishna and serves his guru, he is released from the meshes of illusion and attains to Krishna's feet", and leaving these (i.e. temptations) and the religious system based on caste (the true Vaishnav) helplessly takes refuge with Krishna. Chaitanya thus condemned the whole ritualistic system of Brahmins, and preached faith in Hari. According to him, worship consisted in love and devotion, song and dance, producing a state of ecstasy in which His presence is realized. All men were competent to perform this worship, irrespective of caste and creed.¹¹⁵ Chaitanya was also against priestly ritualism and caste segregation, and is said to have admitted many Musalmans and Hindu lower castes to membership and to have regarded all worshippers of Krishna as equal".¹¹⁶ Also worth of note is

114. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 41, Vide H.C. Das op. cit., p. 382.

115. Tara Chand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, Allahabad, 1963, p. 219.

116. R.K. Mukherjee, Rise and Fall of East India Company, Berlin, 1958, p. 158, Vide Tarachand, Idem.

the fact that several distinguished disciples of Chaitanya were traders by caste.¹¹⁷ Rupa and Sanatan, two high rank officials of Hussain Shah of Bengal were also ardent disciples of Sri Chaitanya.¹¹⁸

A.N. Chatterjee in his article¹¹⁹ strongly argues that there is remarkable ideological difference between Madhavacharya and Sri Chaitanya. As early as A.D. 1509 (during his preachings at Katwain Bengal), Chaitanya had declared in public that he was endeavouring to build up a neo-Vaishnav society based on the principles of social equality. Subsequently after his South Indian tour he began to preach socially rebellious thoughts. Chaitanya declared that the need to leave "Varashram-dharma" formed an essential prerequisite for worshipping Krishna.¹²⁰ It may, therefore, be seen that the social objectives of Chaitanya being different, he could not possibly agree with the ideas of the Madhav school.

Krishna devotion is possible according to Madhav only after fulfilling the obligations of the "Varnashram dharma", whereas Chaitanya considered "Varnashram Dharma"

117. Ibid., p. 189.

118. Ibid., p. 197.

119. A.N. Chatterjee, op. cit., pp. 291-292.

120. Krishnadas Kaviraj, Chaitanya Charitamrita (Bengali), Madhya, Ch. 22. "Asat sang tyag ei vaishnav car/ stri sangi aka 'asadhu', Krishnabhakta are sav chariya ar varnashramdharma/ak/ncan hanya lay Krishnai ka saran". (A true Vaishnav should shun evil company, female companions and agnostics; he should leave Varnashram dharma and humbly take refuge in Krishna, the Supreme Lord). Quoted from A.N. Chatterjee, locus cit.

as an obstacle for attaining Krishna. Further the attainment of the five kinds of mukti has been declared as the ultimate goal by Madhav, whereas Chaitanya considered love for Krishna as the only supreme value of life and comparatively regarded mukti insignificant. He never desired nirvan mukti. Thus he sang:

"I covet no wealth, nor retinue,
Nor even the lovely maid polsy,
Lord of the Universe, not for these
I address thee in my prayers,
To thyself Supremest Master,
In my every successive life,
May thou be pleased to grant me
The causeless devotion of thy love".

Chaitanya had a deep influence on Tukaram and Tulsi Das. They had followed the form of the instinct of devotional songs as sung by Sri Chaitanya. From various stanzas of the poetries of Chaitanya the fragrance of love and devotion spread over like this:¹²¹

"He may embrace or tread upon
this insect clinging to his feet,
Or give me mortal pain by banishing
me from his sight.
Or in whatever other ways he may

121. B.B. Majumdar, "Chaitanya's Influence on Tukaram and Tulsidas", PIHC, Mysore, 1966.

behave to gratify his passion,
 Yet is this loving Cheat, none other the
 Darling of my heart."

Chaitanya speaks of the recitation of the name
 of the God thus:

"Full many are the names thou
 dost manifest
 Then thou hast imbued with
 all thy power.
 There is no fixed hour for
 their recollections,
 Such is the greatness of thy mercy,
 Krishna Lord."

Very often he forgets himself, his existence and
 sings thus,

"On ! when will my eyes overflow with tears,
 My voice, husky with love choke all utterance
 on my lips
 And all my limbs vibrate with tender joy
 On taking thy secret names."

However, Chaitanya is credited with the composition
 of the Shikshashtak in Sanskrit. It is filled with devo-
 tional songs and a number of advices with values of
 morality.

The bhakti movement through samkirtan was very
 popular and had a tremendous effect on the then socio-

religious order of Orissa. The tenets of this faith were incorporated into the cult of Jagannath, which, over the ages, have proved its receptivity to what is therein the different faiths. The interplay of the different systems of Vaishnavism and Tantricism, then existing in this part of the country, actually transformed the cult of bhakti into an eclectic form of Vaishnavism.¹²² This reform gave enough scope to the followers of Chaitanya to mould the pattern of literature accordingly. The Panchasakhas, particularly, played an important role in this matter and preached this new religion in such a way that every corner of Orissa was influenced by it and the literature and social life of Orissa came completely under its spell.¹²³

From one of the inscriptions of Prataprudradev in the Jagannath temple we learn of the existence of the four classes of Vaishnavas who were entrusted with the performance of nama samkirtan during the time of Bara singhar in the temple. These are a) Ramanuja Panthi, (b) Vishnusvami Panthi, (c) Madhav Panthi, and (d) Gaudiya Panthi. Chaitanya's influence was felt in all these sampradayas.¹²⁴ These sampradayas are still attached to the temple for the performance of the nama samkirtan.

122. H.C. Das, op. cit., pp. 381-392.

123. K.C. Mishra, The Cult of Jagannath, Calcutta, 1971 p. 44.

124. M.M. Chakravarty, J.A.S.S., col.LXII, 1898, pp.96-97.

After the advent of Chaitanya, the great social reformer, the Radha-Krishna cult became very widely popular.¹²⁵ He gave a spiritual colour to the unconventional and erotic love of Krishna and Radha.¹²⁶ Gopakeli, a part of the Bhagavat of Jagannath Das also made the Radha-Krishna cult more popular. The Panchasakhas, writing in the vernacular, became a medium of spreading the ideas among the rural people. The greatest contribution of Chaitanya was the introduction of nagar-kirtan (street singing of hymns and processions from city to city) in group, consisting of people of all castes and creeds.¹²⁷ The nagar-kirtan, centering around Chaitanya, attracted people in large number. Through this method he reached the masses to an extent that no other saint could.

The new religion of Chaitanya has made Bengali and Orissan Hindu society what it is today. This new movement left many of the lower castes unconverted, especially those living in the fringe areas covered by hills and jungles. But Vaishnavism, in the vast spaces of Bengal which it dominates, has produced two whole-some fruits: the ritualistic sacrifice of animals has been totally

125. R.D. Banerjee, Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture, VI, p. 127.

126. N. Das (trans.), Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya lila, VIII, Cuttack, p. 65.

127. H.C. Das, op. cit., p. 383.

abolished and drinking of strong-wine (Karan-bari) as a religious ritual, has been stopped.¹²⁸

Even greater than this, moral reformation of the upper and middle classes has been the work of Vaishnavism. It uplifted the lower ranks of the society and the illiterate masses by carrying religion to their doors, through the device of nama-sankirtan or chanting processions - which is spoken of as the unique contribution of Chaitanya to the spiritual life of the modern age. The movement, however, attempted to break down orthodox Brahminic domination over society and proclaimed the dignity of every man, as possessing within himself a particle of divine soul (jivatma). One of its greatest poets has sung:¹²⁹

Listen, brother!

Man is the greatest thing in the world,
Nothing else is so great.

Of course, there were lesser number of women than men in the faith of Vaishnavism, but their cultural upliftment was promoted by allowing them to read shastras. The new life breathed into Bengal, as the Vaishnav Gosains set themselves to converting the oborginal tribes, thus brought a new light into their lives after ages of neglect, contumaciousness and superstition.¹³⁰

128. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed), The History of Bengal, vol.II (1200-1757 AD), University of Dacca, 1972, p. 221.

129. Idem.

130. Ibid., pp. 221-222.

Nam-samkirtan which was the main part of the faith and movement of Chaitanyaism also stimulated the cultural integration like the development of song, dance, and music in Orissa. Congregational singing of kirtan processions were organised during the Rath yatra festivals at Puri and on occasions like janamastami celebrations, etc. In Bengal it became a part of Chaitanyaism. Chaitanya himself had introduced the kirtan processions or chorus-singing of kirtan during his Navadvipa leela. This type of devotional singing was a vehicle for the propagation of Chaitanya's faith.

It was also seen that Chaitanya's kirtan - singing was accompanied by dance. According to the biographies of Chaitanya, dance with devotional fervour was a part of kirtan music. When kirtan was introduced by him as a fervent religious song, dance was considered to be an integral part of the same.¹³¹

The kirtan came to be sung by the people from house to house and thus spread from town to town. It is said that the accompanying percussion instrument called khole was also introduced by Chaitanya along with the kirtan. Khole (similar to Pakhwaj, with the difference that its body is made up of earth instead of wood) and Kartal (two circular

131. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 123.

pieces made of brass) were the two accompanying instruments played during kirtan. Accompanied by these two simple rhythmical instruments, kirtan music came to be within the reach of the ordinary people among whom the message of Chaitanya spread through such devotional singing. The village folks also took keen interest in this enchanting form of singing and dancing together.

After Chaitanya, and as a result of the ideas of Gaudiya Vaishnavism preached by him, the scintillating music of padavalikirtan made its mark in Bengal. By virtue of the creation of the padavali kirtan system by the Vaishnav Mahajana Padakaras, a glorious period was ushered in the history of the indigenous music of Bengal. Just as Gaudiya Vaishnavism is saturated with all the emotional devotion of the Bengali heart, so also are the very sweet melodies of the padavali songs of vaishnavite composers. Kirtan was the special contribution of the Bengal Vaishnavs to the field of musical culture.¹³²

From the history of Oriya literature the deep influence of the Bhagabat is apparent. The popularization of the Oriya Bhagabat helped in spread of literacy and moral values among the inhabitants of Orissa. The epic, Bhagabat was written on palm-leaves, generally known as

132. Ibid., p. 125.

pothi. The Bhagabat pothi was kept in a house located in the middle or in the corner of the village. The house, popularly known as Bhagabat Ghara, was built and maintained by the villagers themselves. However, the house was used as a community hall by the villagers. The people assembled in the evening, where the Bhagabat was read and discussed widely. The village folks got relaxation of the day's labour by listening to the stories and morals of the Bhagabat. A number of lessons and morals were pictured in Bhagabat, which tallied with the character of the Oriya people. Thus, it was a centre of attraction, and gradually became a centre of learning and education. The people became keenly interested in educating their sons who could recite Bhagabat at the time of their death. It was a wide belief that the soul could attain Vaikunthapur (The heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu) if the person listened to the Bhagavat at the time of his death. Thus there was a wide spread of primary education in Orissa. It is remarkable that in the Census Report of 1900 A.D. the literacy rate of Orissa was adequately higher than that of any other state of India.¹³³

Bhagavat Ghara was used for a number of purposes by the inhabitants of that village. There was not a single big village which had no Bhagavat ghara. However, as a

133. S.N. Dash, "Atibadi Jagannath Das", B.M. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., p. 122.

community hall it became a centre of education, and entertainment, and a hall for village assembly, Court of Village Judiciary (popularly known as Panchayats) and also a guest house for the visitors. During day time the Bhagavat-ghara functioned as a school and in the evening the people used to assemble here to listen to the Bhagavat. At the time of necessity the Village Assembly and Village Panchayat also sat to discuss various village matters, and solve the quarrels and conflicts among the inhabitants. Apart from this, everyday the nam-sankirtan was performed by the village folks, and thereafter the Bhagavat was recited and discussed. However, the Bhagavat had a great impact upon the people of Orissa and the Bhagavat ghara served the multi-purpose programme of the village.

The Chaitanya movement, brought about a significant change in the socio-religious life of the people of Orissa. The Panchasakhas helped Sri Chaitanya in the propagation of the cult of the bhakti and according to Sunyasamhita of Achyutananda Das, they also performed nama-sankirtan with Sri Chaitanya. They maintained distinctions based on their own characteristics, but the social and religious objectives were common.

CHAPTER V
RENAISSANCE IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Most of the Indian languages have their own story of having broken away from the Sanskrit language, to become a complete medium of expression for itself. Once upon a time, Sanskrit was considered as the only language in which the best thoughts of all men of excellence could be expressed. Lord Buddha deviated from this tradition in the 6th century B.C. when he preferred to teach his sermons in the regional language, i.e. Pali. The spark of revolt was initiated by him and he showed the enlightened path of progress for the coming generations. However, in course of time, there has been a growth of consciousness in each and every region of the Indian sub-continent which stimulated the development of regional languages and scripts and the revival of its literature depicting its own life and culture.

Situated in the north-east corner between the Aryan speaking and Dravidian - speaking territories of India, Orissa always became a meeting ground of these two main streams of Indian culture and produced in course of time, a literature of its own, now known as Oriya literature.¹³⁴ As far as the Eastern group of the Indian languages are concerned, a breakthrough was made by the wandering siddhas

134. K.C. Panigrahi, Sarala Das, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1975, p.9.

of the 7th-8th centuries who decided to depend on the spoken word as a medium of communication with the common people. Some of them, Luipa, Sarahapa and Kanhupa can reasonably be assumed to have hailed from Orissa. They were among the pioneers who broke the sacred convention and sang and preached in the people's own language, instead of, in Sanskrit.¹³⁵ The inhibitory gap between thought and speech was thus closed and the bhasas, the spoken languages, took their second birth and came to be recognised as worthy media for all types of communication.

Although other poets appear to have preceded Sarala Dasa, he is generally recognised to be the father of Oriya literature. A Shudra by birth, he lived in the second half of the fifteenth century AD, and created a perennial fountain of literary forms and traditions with distinct characteristics of their own. Three of his epics, the Vilanka Ramayan, the Mahabharat and the Chandi Puran were far known, and of them the Mahabharat was his magnum opus. In writing his Mahabharat the poet has followed the main outline of the story of the Sanskrit Mahabharat, but has made numerous deviations and has added to it copiously the stories of his own creation and various other matters known to him. In the final form, Sarala Dasa's Mahabharat was a new creation analogous to Kalidas's Raghuvansha which

135. C.R. Das, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

was distinctly an original work, even though it was based on Ramayan.¹³⁶

If a language has anything ever to contribute to the making of a national consciousness, then we can say in the case of the Oriya literature that it was Sarala Das who first created this consciousness and unity. A new faith was born, to stand on its own and to be able to express itself in ones own language. He was also a pioneer in introducing all sorts of deshaja words into his literary vocabulary. He was the contemporary of the Gajapati, Kapilendra-dev, who patronised Sanskrit at the height of its prestige in the court. All this was happening in a remote village far away from the headquarters of the learned. Sarala Das called himself a Shudramuni as he was doing all this and working for a new birth and a new faith. The picture of the contemporary social life has been lucidly depicted in his works. The language was simple, lucid and mature.¹³⁷ However, what Sarala Das had initiated in the second half of the 15th century, flourished and culminated, with the

136. K.C. Panigrahi, op. cit., p. 10.

137. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., 1981, p. 143, Vide C.R. Das, op. cit., p. 84. The original name of Sarala Das was Siddheswar Parida and he recognised himself Sarala Das and Shudramuni as he was a devotee of Goddess Sarala of Jhankar in Cuttack district.

Panchsakhas, in the 16th century, among whom the contributions of Balaram Das, Jagannath Das and Achyutananda Das were unique, through their Jagamohan Ramayan, Bhagavat and Harivamsha respectively.

The first renaissance in Oriya literature took place during the Suryavamshi period. In the courts, the kings and other chiefs devoted themselves to the growth, development and enrichment of Oriya literature. Thus, the difficulties in the composition of Sanskrit, the example of the early developed Telugu, the influence of Vaishnavism and the overthrow of the Hindu rule by the Muslims - all these tended to swell the tide in favour of the Oriya language.¹³⁸ In the beginning, the Purnas were written in Sanskrit. But when Sanskrit, the repository of all sacred and mythological lores, became a dead language, and the common illiterate people wanted to understand the Purans, the translations of Sanskrit works into vernaculars began.¹³⁹ The poet Sarala Das was the pioneer of this movement and the Panchsakhas accelerated the progress. Generally speaking, these were modelled on Sanskrit works, but they were not merely literal translations of the original Sanskrit works. The works showed remarkable originality and vigour. The

138. P.K. Patnaik, A Forgotten Chapter of Orissan History, Calcutta 1979, pp. 104-5.

139. S. Mohanty, Oriya Sahitya Madhyaprva (Appendix), pp. 314-15.

themes were, no doubt, taken from the Sanskrit literature, but the poets added so much from their imagination, as to give entirely a new colour to it.

Apart from this, the contribution of Chaitanya to the development of Oriya language and literature was unique. He used to impart his religious instructions in Oriya. With the Pundits he argued in Sanskrit, but to the laity he preached in their spoken language. His disciples chiefly came from the lower classes and they carried out the practice of preaching in Oriya, more extensively.¹⁴⁰ In this way, religion, which had been hitherto a strong prop of Sanskrit learning, became helpful in the development of Oriya literature. In contradistinction to the orthodox Brahmins, there grew up a body of Vaishnav Gurus and Mahantas whose influence now gradually increased and with whose increasing influence the improvement of Oriya language ensued. The Vaishnav devotees translated the Sanskrit religious works into Oriya, composed new devotional poems in vernacular and also organised samkirtans or various sampradayas.¹⁴¹ Now the Gods could be sung to in the language of the common people by the saints who themselves were all well-versed in Sanskrit but had resolved to write and bring it down

140. P.K. Patnaik, op. cit., p. 104.

141. M.M. Chakravarty, "Orissa in the 16th Century", JASB, 1898, pp. 332-376.

to the people. It seems Ramananda was the first adventurer in this direction. He was the disciple of Ramanuja, who was an ardent supporter of the Sanskrit language, but he came to feel that knowledge could never reach the larger mass of the people as long as the masters kept themselves confined to the bounds of a language that was not spoken by the people. Kabir, who was a disciple of Ramananda, proclaimed that the spoken language had the dynamism of the water of a flowing stream while Sanskrit was the water of a well that was bound on all sides and had no movement.¹⁴²

It should be remembered that the Panchasakhas - especially Balaram, Jagannath and Achyutananda - were great scholars in Sanskrit themselves, had access to the Sanskrit original works of the great tradition, but as a rule, were never moved from within to anything in Sanskrit. Whatever is available of their writing is all written in Oriya; simple, easy Oriya without any show of erudition or sophistication of style.

Balaram Das's Ramayan was called Jagmohan Ramayan in respect of Lord Jagannath and it reached the humblest of the cottages of Orissa. He had composed this Ramayan

142. C.R. Das, op. cit., p. 85.

before that of Tulsi Das, i.e. Rama Charit Manas.¹⁴³ In the 17th anka (1511 A.D.), of the Gajapati Prataprudradev, he wrote the Vedanta Sara Gupta Gita.¹⁴⁴ According to the poet the work was based on his exposition of the Vedanta in the presence of the king. Krishna was the hero of three of Balaram's religious poems. In the Virat Gita, Krishna has explained the Yoga philosophy to Arjuna. In two other works, entitled Brahmanda Bhugol and Gupta Gita, he has explained the principles of Pinda Brahmanda or universe within the body and the void (Sunya).¹⁴⁵ In the Kanta Koili and Sri Rama Koili captive Sita and mother Kaushalya bewail a lot, respectively.¹⁴⁶ In the Amarkosha Gita Siva has explained the principles of Yoga to Parvati. More interesting is the work named Vata Avakash in which Lord Jagannath is said to have held a court, which was attended by all the deities of Orissa. In the Saptanga Yogasara Tika,

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143. B. Mohanty (ed), Konark, 1971, p. 341. Balaram Das was born around 1473 or 1482 A.D. and he had completed the Ramayan while he was 30. Thus his Jagamohan Ramayan was completed in 1512 A.D. According to K.B. Jindal (A History of Hindi Literature, pp. 53-53) Tulsi Das was born in 1532 A.D. and also he completed the Rama Charita Manas in 1574 A.D. Thus Balaram Das wrote Ramayan before Tulsi Das.
144. Ibid., p. 346.
145. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 144.
146. N. Mishra (ed), Oriya Koili Sahitya (Ancient and Medieval), Orissan Oriental Text Series (Oriya)-6, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Bhubaneswar, 1973, pp. 6-17.

Gorakhnath has explained the principles of Yoga to Mallikanath. The most valuable piece of his work was the Luxmi Puran - a crusade against caste and untouchability. In the Puran Luxmi got a declaration of social egalitarianism and a casteless and classless society by Lord Jagannath.¹⁴⁷

Jagannath Das was the most celebrated Vaishnav poet of medieval Orissa. His contribution to the enrichment of the bhakti literature in Orissa was unique. His Oriya Bhagavat brought a significant change in society, and helped in the spread of social discipline and moral upliftment among the people. Like Balaram Das, he also showed eclecticism in his poetry. The Sanskrit text refers to a milkmaid of Vrindavan who was favoured by Krishna but was subsequently deserted by him for her pride. The Gaudiya commentators maintain that this favourite Gopi was Radha herself, though Sridhar Swami in his standard commentary on the Bhagavat does not identify that Gopi as Radha. But Jagannath Das has identified this Gopi with Vrindavati, who was a companion of Radha.¹⁴⁸ Thus in the Artha Koili, Krishna¹⁴⁹ and in the Tula Bhina, Siva¹⁵⁰ have explained

147. B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., pp. 353-356 Vide N. Mishra, "Panchasakha Sahitya", B. Mohanty (ed), ibid., p.485

148. P. Mukherjee, locus cit.

149. N. Mishra, op. cit., pp. 18-35.

150. P. Mukherjee, locus, cit.

the philosophy of Yoga. In the Daru Brahma Gita, the poet has described the advent of the sacred log at the Purushottam Kshetra Puri.

Achyutananda Das, a native of the Cuttack district was the greatest exponent of the philosophy of Orissan Vaishnavism. In Sunya Samhita he has admirably expounded the theory of the void. In this work, we find the assimilation of Buddhistic ideas in Orissan Vaishnavism.¹⁵¹ In the Anakar Samhita he has explained the primordial (Anadi)Brahma as the source of all bliss and formless. Achyutananda has translated the Harivamsha and composed two long poems Navagujjari and Vyallis Chaupodi in adoration of Radha Krishna. Another work of Achyutananda, entitled Brahma Sankuli Lekhan, has described the esoteric Hatha Yoga.

Yashovanta's life has been described by his disciple, Sudarshan Das, in his book, Yashonantanka Das Chaurashi Aina (84 Arts of Yashovant Das). In his Govinda Chandra Gita, Yashovant has described the story of Raja Govindachandra, who renounced the world and became a follower of Siddhacharya Hadipa. Hadipa was a sweeper by caste and one of the greatest exponents of the Natha cult.¹⁵² Though a Vaishnav,

151. H.C. Das, op. cit., p. 335f. Vide K. Pathisharma, "Mahapurusha Achyutananda", B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit. p. 468.

152. R. Rath, "Bhaktakabi Jashananta Das", B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., pp. 447-450. Govinda Chandra Tika was also translated into Bengali like Oriya Bhagavat and Oriya Mahabharat and thus gained popularity a lot.

Yashovanta translated a Saivite Sanskrit text, entitled, Siva Svaradaya. Yashovanta's most important work, the Prema Bhakti Brahma Gita expound the philosophy of void.

Ananta was also one of the members of the Pancha-sakha movement. In Rasa he has paid ^{homage} / to Chaitanya. In the Sunyanama Bheda and Hetu Uday Bhagavat he has described the principles of Yoga and the conception of Pinda Brahmanda.¹⁵³

We can include the wealth of the Koili Sahitya (Cuckoo literature), Chautishas and bhajanas which have come down to this day from the hoary times of Sarala Das and Panchasakha. It is difficult to ascertain where exactly the folk-lorish phase of literature came to an end, to give way to the Koilis, etc. From this point of view, the modern trend is yet to make a real dent. From various discussions, the Koili Sahitya has been ascertained as the duta kanya or the messenger poems.¹⁵⁴ The poet Markand Das is regarded as the initiator of the Koili in Oriya literature.¹⁵⁵ His Keisav Koili is even now recited in villages. The poet describes the grief of mother Yashoda for Krishna who has

153. B. Sahu, "Hetu Uday Bhagavat", B. Mohanty (ed), op. cit., pp. 429-440.

154. N. Mishra (ed), op. cit. (editorial).

155. Ibid., p.1.

gone to Mathura. In Koili poems the cuckoo has been addressed in place of Krishna because of its similarity in colour. Jagannath Das has also written a commentary on the Kesav Koili. Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Shankar Das, Chaitanya Das, Gopal Krishna and many other poets have also enriched the prosperity of koili poems in Oriya literature.

Apart from Panchasakhas many other poets also concentrated in the writing of Chautishas and bhajans. Vatsa Das's Kalasa Chautisa describes the marriage of Siva with Parvati. In Chautisa poems, the lines in each stanza begin with a letter of the alphabet. Damodar Das, the author of Rasakulya Chautisa used some archaic words in his work. Some scholars believe that he lived in the 15th century.¹⁵⁶ The poet Chaitanya Das also wrote Nirguna Mahatmya and the Vishnu garbha puran. It is stated in the Nirguna Mahatmya, Canto XVI, that it was composed in the reign of Gajapati Pratap-rudradev. The poet has described the concept of the void (Sunya) in this work. In the later works, he has described the creation of universe by the formless (Nirakar) Vishnu.¹⁵⁷

Medieval Bengali literature directly flourished under the influence of Chaitanya's faith and movement. This was

156. P. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 143.

157. Ibid., p. 149.

due to the followers of Chaitanya in Bengal. The subject of Vaishnav literature of Medieval Bengal deserves an extensive study on account of the abundance of available material. We have some distinguished vernacular poems in the Sanskrit lyrical gem. The tradition of composing Vaishnav padas in the style of Gita Govinda never died out in Bengal after the revival of the Krishna-cult under Chaitanya. It was taken up with redoubled enthusiasm in the 16th century, giving rise to the brilliant literature of Vaishnav lyrics in Bengal.¹⁵⁸

At the outset, it should be remembered that all Bengali biographies were composed in poetic form as this was the vogue in the medieval period. The best biographical account and at the same time one of the greatest productions of Bengali literature was Chaitanya Charitamrita by Krishnadas Kaviraj. Before describing Krishnadas's master piece, mention must be made of Vrindaban Das's biography of Chaitanya Chaitanya Bhagavat, composed by Vrindaban Das, was the earliest biography of the Master written in the Bengali language.¹⁵⁹ Scholars are of the opinion that he completed this biographical work within fifteen years of the passing away of Chaitanya. Several poems were also composed on Sri Chaitanya in Bengali.

158. R.C. Majumdar (ed), The History of Bengal, vol.I, University of Delca, 1963, p. 390.

159. D.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 102.

Many other poets also flourished in the later 16th and early 17th centuries in Orissa following the movement of Sri Chaitanya and Panchasakhas. They contributed to the growth of the bhakti literature, with devotional spirit and historical significance. Kanhei Khuntia was the contemporary of Sri Chaitanya, and he used to work as a servitor of the Jagannath temple. He wrote Mahabhava Prakash of which the last part has been lost. Only the first two cantos and a portion of the third have been published. In this work he has described the Radha-Krishna cult, whatever he listened from Chaitanya. Historically, the importance of the work lies in the description of the Muslim invasion of Orissa in 1511 A.D.¹⁶⁰ Sri Hari Das, the author of Mayur Chandrika probably flourished towards the end of the 16th century. He has described Ray Ramananda's religious discourses with Chaitanya. Apart from this he has mentioned the manifestation of Radha and Krishna in Lord Jagannath.¹⁶¹ The Chaitanya Bhagavat was written by Isvar Das in the second half of the 17th century. This work informs us regarding the history of Vaishnavism and the allied sects in Orissa. Nanak, Kavir, Buddhist, Virasimha, Virabhadra, Jangali, Nandins, Jagai and Madhai are all introduced

160. P. Mukherjee, History of the Chaitanya Faith in Orissa, New Delhi, 1979, p. 12.

161. Hari Das, Mayur Chandrika, Canto, 12. Quoted from P. Mukherjee, Idem.

indiscriminately in this work. He gives a detailed description of Chaitanya's association with the Pancha-sakhas. Secondly, Isvar Das is the only writer who rises above sectarian feelings.¹⁶² Divakar Das wrote Jagannath Charitamrita - the biography of Jagannath Das in the middle of the seventeenth century. It is the first biographical work in Oriya literature.¹⁶³ Apart from the discussion about the life and teachings of Jagannath Das, he has also described the extension of political patronage to Chaitanya. It is also stated that after taking sanyas, Chaitanya visited many places including the various shrines in northern and southern India, but nowhere he found Prema bhakti (devotion based on love). So he preferred to stay in purushottam Kshetra.

Moreover, the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the rapid progress and the development of the Puran literature. These religious literatures constituted the largest and the finest mass reading in the land. These also became directly responsible for the acquisition of literacy among the peasantry, and constituted the most portent ethical inspiration in the rural society. Written in the language of the masses, in simple and easy style, telling of Gods and Goddesses in terms of the men and women of the rustic society, discussing the day-to-day problem

162. Isvar Das, Chaitanya Bhagavat, quoted from P. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 14.

163. Ibid., p. 16.

of the common people through the mouths of Gods and Saints, and always bringing about in the end the triumph of virtue over evil, these Purans continued, and even continues till date as a perennial source of joy, enlightenment, and entertainment to the simple folk both in towns and villages.¹⁶⁴

After prolonged discussions and criticisms it has been accepted by various historians and Oriya literatures that no literature could be compared with that of the Panchasakhas, in respect to its ethical values and the spirit of consciousness. These ethical values of the Panchasakha literature have been continuing indisputably since the sixteenth century till date. This literature had a significant influence upon the following generation of poets. The poet Bhakta charan, Bhupati Pundit, Radhanath Roy and Gopabandhu Dash were deeply influenced by the style of language, lyric and mode of presentation of Jagannath Das. Gopabandhu Dash was one of the freedom fighters of modern Orissa whose heart was melted with love of God, love of nation and, above all, the love of mankind, only because of the impact of the devotional and humanitarian literature of the Panchasakhas. Certainly, the life-long endeavour of the Panchasakhas was successful in raising up the

164. M. Manshingh History of Oriya Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 108-110.

consciousness for social equality, and a spirit of renaissance in Oriya language and literature. It was an innovative step on their part, when the Oriya language was in its cradle. They taught it how to speak, how to be independent and how to advance with the other literatures of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Situated in the north-east corner between the Aryan speaking and the Dravidian speaking territories of the Indian sub-continent, Orissa became a meeting ground of these two main streams of Indian culture. In course of time it developed in various fields like politics, literature, art, sculpture and religion, even before the ascendance of the Gajapati rulers. The political boundaries of Orissa were extended from the river Ganges to Krishna. The rulers patronised learning, culture and the propagation of the various sects. Many poets and religious teachers endeavoured to improve the Oriya script, language and, above all, the literature. The renaissance of the regional language gained momentum since the second half of the fifteenth century.

The nature of the state in medieval Orissa was monarchical whereas the society was stratified on the basis of caste and class. The social life was dominated by the orthodox religious principles. The common people suffered a lot because of the wide practice of Brahminism, casteism and untouchability. Education, in fact, was not monopolized by the Brahmins. Rather they monopolized the religious institutions. Of course, the women of the higher classes and royal houses got some social status, but it was

miserable for the women of lower class. There was child marriage and low literacy among women. Thus, the society was hierarchical, steeped in the ideas of inequality and discrimination.

In almost all the Indian languages, during the 15th and 16th centuries, there was an upheaval of a very great significance in the shaping of Indian religion and society of the time. The emergence of the Panchasakha Movement was a remarkable feature in the 16th century Orissa. The Panchasakhas or the five friends were popularly known as Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Yasovanta Das and Anant Das. Four of these Panchasakhas were Shudras, while Jagannath Das was the only Brahmin. They protested against casteism, untouchability, discrimination of Shudras and above all against Brahminism. The Muktimandap of the Puri Jagannath temple was the centre of their test. They protested against the prevailing religious ethos through their writings, discussions and propagations.

The Panchasakhas had come at a time when the people were engaged in all sorts of ritual, showing off in a bid to beat one another, as it were. The learned men kept trumpeting their shastric references and particular sects were allowed to flaunt all their enterals, because they could get the patronization of the king. In spite of this,

the Panchasakha literature and philosophy flourished as a result of the culture and patronage of the court. They emphasised upon right attitude, readiness and receptivity. In tune with the Indian mystic saints all over India in the middle ages, the Panchasakhas proclaimed that the liberalizing knowledge is in our hearts itself, we have to search for it, grow up to it and translate it into life. They declared that knowledge of the divine is not at all a remote thing, but is in the very temple that is in each one of us.

In 1510, Chaitanya's advent, and his stay for eighteen years in Puri, marked a significant change in the socio-religious life of its inhabitants. His association with the Panchasakhas led to a combined effort to start the bhakti movement. This was very much successful and popular among the masses. The Panchasakhas had enough knowledge of Sanskrit, but they preferred to write in the spoken language of the people, through which their feeling, thought and messages of consciousness could reach the common folks. However, the progress of Vaishnavism could not eclipse completely the other sects, viz. Saivism, Saktism, Saur and Ganapatyabad, though, it conquered all of them. In this way, Orissa became the centre of the conglomeration of various sects, cults and philosophies. The multi-faceted

development took place in the Oriya culture with the gradual growth of discussion on the philosophies of various religions.

Chaitanya's devotional cult and his samkirtan movement touched the very corner of the heart of the rural masses. He introduced a new type of emotional and devotional worship called kirtan, singing and dancing together and praying to God, was the essence of the kirtan. Chaitanya emphasized on universal love and brotherhood as the first step to reach God. Though he did not care for rituals, yet he did not discard the sacred scriptures and idolatry. He disregarded all distinctions of caste and creed so far as the religious institution was concerned. Of course, he did never allow himself and his followers to have any type of social relation with women, but he was successful in the bringing about the unity of community through the samkirtan movement. The Vaishnavism propounded by him very soon became the "state's religion" as the king, Prataprudradev, patronized it. Many state officials, military commanders and samantas also embraced the faith of Chaitanya. The simple writings of the Panchasakhas, in the themes of love and devotion, also propelled the movement to spread over the country. However, after Sri Chaitanya passed away, the task of propagating his religion rested upon the two great

Vaishnav apostles, Shyamananda and Rasikananda. Accounts of these Vaishnav worthies are to be found in almost all the important Vaishnav works, but mainly in the Bhakti Ratnakar, Shyamanand Prakash and Rasika Mangal, composed by Gopijan Vallabh.

Many noted historians have held Chaitanya's quietist movement responsible for the decline of medieval Orissa. Prataprudradev, though an unsuccessful ruler and not a good administrator, championed the cause of Vaishnavism, and further hightened the importance of Jagannath. The prevailing political situation was quite favourable at the time of his succession. The Bahamani Kingdom in the South was weak and faced dismemberment. After the death of Narasimha Salva, Vijayanagar empire became weak. Prataprudradev might have tried to crush these kingdoms or befriended one of them. But he lacked the foresight and the shrewdness of a ruler. The Kalingan empire had reached out to become a kingdom equivalent of the present size of Orissa. However, by 1510 A.D., the situation had become unfavourable for Orissa. Vijayanagar rose to eminence once again under Krishnadev Rays and resumed its aggressive attitude towards Orissa. Golconda became an independent state. Sultan Hussain Shah, an aggressive ruler of Bengal, also raised his sword against Orissa. Prataprudradev was not capable

of fighting against all these powers and ultimately ceded territory after territory to his enemies. Thus he lost the vast empire built by his mighty predecessors.

Can the decline of Orissa be linked with the great Vaishnav saint-poet Sri Chaitanya and his faith Vaishnavism which he had so assiduously preached in Orissa? On account of its acceptance by the royalty, the religion preached by Chaitanya had become almost a fashionable cult, and important officers of the state had embraced the new faith with profuse zeal. However, Chaitanya never asked the ruling elements to give up their responsibility for the protection of the state. Krishna, the God of love, was also the apostle of the doctrine of Karma and exhorted Arjuna to take up his weapon to fight for righteousness and thus fulfilled his duty. Even though Chaitanya did not emphasise the martial aspect, his movement cannot be looked upon as a movement of the defeated any more than Buddhism at its prime. Prataprudradev did try to retrieve the fortune of the Gajapati house. But he lacked both military and diplomatic skill and could not add or recover what he had lost.

R.D. Banarjee has strongly argued that Prataprudradev was so deeply influenced by Sri Chaitanya that he withdrew his plan to wage a war against Bengal on the

advice of the latter. According to H.K. Mahetab, the bhakti movement virtually affected the administration in Orissa when it faced grave dangers both from outside and inside. In the Chaitanya Bhagabat, written by Brindaban Das in 1550 AD, Sri Chaitanya is said to have given the following advice to Prataprudradev, "Your mind should be attached to Sri Krishna only and nothing else. Always have the name of Krishna on your lips." This cannot be construed as advice not to attend to the affairs of the state, but to do his duty in the spirit of renunciation and with Krishna's name on his lips. But it might have suited the Brahmin detractors of Chaitanya to put the political discomfiture of the ruler at his door. However, a quietist movement social equality, brotherhood and love can hardly be held responsible for weakening the political structure of a kingdom. A variety of social, economic, political and military factors must bear the main responsibility. For that, in otherwords, social injustice and discrimination against which Chaitanya's movement raised its powerful voice, cannot be held primarily responsible for the lack of political cohesion, lack of the sense of unity and responsible for the downfall of the state.

The sixteenth century was an era of cultural development and literary revival in medieval Orissa. The

Panchasakha movement was of great significance, in reconstructing the socio-religious life of its inhabitants. Many saints and poets visited Puri to preach their religious ideas and philosophies, but their influence upon the contemporary Oriya social reform movement was only marginal. The Panchasakhas introduced the philosophy of knowledge-cum-devotion as the path to reach God, whereas the North Indian saint poets had propounded only one way i.e. Bhakti to reach God. In their own way each tried to create a man who would have the inner strength to fight against injustice and cherished principles, no matter the cost of personal sacrifice. Still, they differ from each other in their individual ideology and principles.

The Shudras played a predominant role in the reform which occurred in the social and cultural field of medieval Orissa. The torch-bearers of this enlightened movement were called Shudramunis. Of the Panchasakhas, Balaram Das, Achyutananda Das, Jashovanta Das and Ananta Das were Shudras or, more generally non-Brahmins. Only Jagannath Das was a Brahmin and he also protested against old traditions, rituals and conservatism. The Panchasakhas directed their revolt against Brahminism, rituals, caste, untouchability and, above all, against all forms of disabilities of the Shudras, through their impetuous

writings. Despite the vast knowledge in Sanskrit, Balaram Das wrote Jagamohan Ramayan, Jagannath Das wrote Oriya Bhagavat and Achyutananda also composed the Hari-vansha in the spoken language of the people through which they themselves could read and understand the Purans and dharmasastras. These saints carried out a sustained campaign to protect the common mass of people from the exploitation of the Puran pandas and, secondly, to raise the democratic consciousness among the lower strata of the society. In the process, the poets had to face the opposition of the orthodox Brahmins who induced the king to put them through various tests. Most of the poets were banished from their places of residence during the period of Prataprudradev. Achyutananda was banished to Puri, Jagannath to the sea-shore, Balibantar and Balaram to the Samagara pata. In spite of these repressive measures, the Panchasakha movement gained momentum and attacked exploitation and all forms of discriminations. Lastly, it opened a new page in the history of Orissa with the lofty declaration of the enlightened concept of social egalitarianism, human dignity and universal brotherhood.

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